Border City Chronicles

Four More

Edmond Gagnon

Norm Strom Crime Series

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Gone Fishing

One

Strangers

According to the weatherman, it was a perfect day for fishing. A slight breeze picked up later in the afternoon, pushing clouds into what was supposed to be a clear blue sky. To me, being a meteorologist was a dream job. Your forecast could be wrong every day, yet you stayed employed. Regardless, it was a nice day for the end of September, in the City of Windsor.

Walter Rawlings sat on the top step of his front porch, waiting for his buddy to pick him up. They both worked at the Bendix plant in West Windsor before the asbestos scare caused operations to cease and the company eventually closed down. Employees were ill-informed at the time as to the severity of the health risk. Years later, after several cancer-related deaths, a class-action lawsuit was launched.

Walter was able to find work with a buddy who owned a moving company, but it wasn't long before he messed up his back. Just thinking about the injury had him tapping his pocket to make sure he had his pain pills with him.

At 56, Jack Miller found his age and a limited skillset made him virtually unemployable. He pulled to the curb in his older model Buick Lesabre.

Walter picked up his fishing gear and climbed into the car. He grumbled about how it was too late in the day to start fishing, but soon apologized, blaming his shitty mood on back pain.

His friend reached into a small cooler and handed him a beer. "One of these might take the edge off."

The younger man popped open the can and asked Miller how he made out job hunting earlier that day. Silence followed, answering his question. They headed toward the Detroit River and turned north onto McKee Road. Cracked pavement, potholes, and gravel patches challenged the car's tires and suspension as the two men made their way to the dead end at the old coal dock on the Windsor waterfront.

The Keith Power Plant loomed on the right with a front-row view of Zug Island across the Detroit River. It wasn't the prettiest of fishing holes, but the men weren't there for the view. It was close to home, and they had done well there in the past. Few others knew about this secluded and quiet spot. Truth was, the ugly scenery and polluted water kept most people away.

To the west, the setting sun took on an amber hue, its path taking it behind the giant smokestacks of the steel factories across the river. Thick smoke pushed its way into the Michigan sky. Bruised colors crested the impending dusk, offering what looked like a polluted rainbow. The wind carried the smell over to Ontario. Windsor residents had put up with it for years.

The out-of-work factory men set up their fishing gear, taking notice they weren't alone. Two younger men drank beer and fished nearby. One wore a white painter's hat with red letters on it; probably more of the unemployed. Two other men fished further west, possibly a father and son, but they left around the time the newcomers broke out the booze.

A conversation picked up and the two pairs of men decided to share a case of beer. Pooling their pocket money, Miller drove off

to fetch a 2-4. The fish weren't biting, but it didn't really matter. The men chatted, drank beer, and made small talk. As the cloak of darkness fell Jack and Walter helped one of the strangers untangle his fishing line. That's when everything went wrong. Unprovoked, the younger men turned on the seniors.

Both older men were beaten severely and robbed. They struck Jack on the head several times with a tire iron. He saw Walter forced to the ground at knifepoint, and beaten. They tied up both men with fishing line; their hands and ankles bound together, their wallets and keys were stolen.

The attackers rolled Walter into the Detroit River and threw chunks of cement at him when he surfaced. He fell unconscious and disappeared beneath the surface of the dark water.

Two

The Call

I had been on the job seven years, including my time as a police cadet. It was a month before my nineteenth birthday, when the Windsor Police hired me. I was eleven when my father left. Being the eldest of six children, and acting as the man in the family, I matured quickly. Working part time and full-time jobs, I learned to appreciate the value of a dollar and the importance of earning and becoming self-sufficient.

Watching my mother work up to three jobs at a time trying to feed and clothe us was a valuable lesson in responsibility. I really don't know how she managed. She said if we wanted the finer things in life, we would have to get off our asses and work for them. For me it started with babysitting and shoveling driveways, one paper route, and then two. Still in school, I got a warehouse job at a catalog store, and installed aluminum siding in the summer.

During my time working for a company that sold kitchenware, the office manager called me into his office and asked what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I told my boss I was interested in police work. He suggested I use my lunch hour to apply for a job with the Windsor Police. The rest is history.

It is surprising how much cops are exposed to in seven years working the streets. It changed my personality; I became more callous. How could I not, seeing the lack of respect people had for themselves and others and what they did to prove it. That's where a sense of cop humor helped. It was better to make fun of life than to let it get you down.

A coping method shared by many I worked with was to talk about how to get out or start up a business and make more money. Some took that route and were successful, others were not and tried to get back into policing. We called it the seven-year itch; that period when you thought you'd seen it all and needed a change to keep your sanity. I almost bought into a video store, and even considered buying a fishing lodge in northern Ontario.

I worked downtown at police headquarters in 1984, one of two stations in the city at that time. On Saturday, September 22nd, I was assigned to a patrol car on the Delta platoon. Preferring the action on the overlap shift, we covered the changeover between afternoon and midnight crews. I traded away my midnight shifts whenever possible, sick of the old veterans who handed over the keys to drive and then told you to park it so they could catch some z's.

Young and gung-ho, spending the night listening to my partner snoring was not what I signed up for. After my time as a cadet. I walked a beat for two years and worked my way up the seniority totem pole into single and two-man patrol cars. It was the place to be if you craved frontline action.

At the time of my seven-year itch, I thought I'd seen it all.

Call log for Saturday, September 22nd, 1984:

Unit 107 – West Side (Delta Shift - 1845-0300 hours)
Partner – George Yates (nickname-Farmer)

1907 hours – 400 block of Karl – Racing Dirt Bike – We drove down the block and around the area. All quiet, no racing bike. 10-8, No Report (code to book clear and back in service)

1934 hours – Tecumseh & Curry – Man Down – Caller thought the man had been assaulted but he was injured in a slip and fall. Handled by EMS.

1946 hours – Ambassador Bridge – Assist Customs – Helped them to process and transport a man arrested for importing a prohibited weapon. Another American trucker with a handgun.

2037 hours – 3489 Wells – Assist Unit 101 – We backed them up on a violent domestic call and stood by until they cleared us.

2135 hours – Scheduled Relief – Our assigned lunch hour, my chance to work out.

2315 hours – Bronson's Tavern at 4280 Sandwich Street – Assault Report.

2325 hours – Arrival at the rear of Bronson's.

We met bar employees and a badly injured man near the kitchen door. The victim identified himself as Walter Rawlings 56, of Erie Street, in Windsor. The man appeared to be in shock, covered in blood and mud, and his clothes wet. I used my flashlight to get a better look at his injuries. He had a deep 3" cut on the right side of

his forehead, his left eye was black and blue and swollen closed. His left ear was almost torn in half and the tip of his right index finger had been severed.

Walter told us he and his friend had been fishing down at the old coal dock by the power plant when they were attacked, beaten and robbed. He said he must have been unconscious and woke up under water in the Detroit River. His hands and feet were bound with a fishing line, and he tore off the tip of his finger breaking free. He thought he was going to die.

Once he loosened his restraints and broke the water's surface, he saw he had drifted downstream. Badly injured, he crawled out of the river and into the tall reeds to stay out of sight. Knowing Bronson's Tavern wasn't too far off, he headed in that direction. Fearing he might pass out or fall unconscious again, Rawlings struggled to stay upright. When he walked out of the marsh, he approached a tavern employee smoking a cigarette near the kitchen door. The man thought he was witnessing a scene from The Walking Dead.

The victim told us his friend, Jack Miller, had also been beaten. He was missing and normally drove a white Buick Lesabre. We left the injured man with ambulance attendants and went to look for Miller. Farmer and I searched the area where the men had been fishing and saw the white car racing through a gravel yard, heading for the road. I activated the flashing roof lights and the Buick stopped near Windsor Salt Company's main gate on Prospect Street.

The driver verbally identified himself as Jack Miller. The man was badly injured, his face and clothes covered in blood. He had a severe laceration on the top of his head and a deep cut on his left hand between his thumb and forefinger. Both victims were taken to the hospital by EMS. Considering the serious nature of the assaults, we called for detectives and forensic specialists. Working the front lines meant we dealt with the situation at hand, then passed it along for follow-up by investigators.

We handled emergency and non-emergency calls alike, everything from barking dogs to robberies and shootings. Basic training at police college came nowhere close to preparing me for what I saw as a cop. It was trial by fire and on the job training. I once heard a line in a movie or cop show that summed up my career as a police officer. They said, "95% of the time it's sheer boredom and the remaining 5% you're running around with your hair on fire." How true—the job was monotony and adrenaline-rush combined. As far as I was concerned, there was no other profession like it and it suited me just fine.

We left the riverfront crime scene in the hands of detectives. By the time we departed it looked like someone had flipped on the night lights at Tiger Stadium. Forensic equipment was limited in those days. A constable working the in main office brought out the bomb truck and set up portable lights to aid officers in the collection of evidence.

Back at police headquarters, completing reports took us until the end of our shift. The only other tidbit of information Farmer and I were able to submit to detectives was the location and license plate number of a suspicious car we had checked out earlier in the evening. It proved to be of no use.

I had the next day off, what was left of it. Always sleeping like a baby, the previous night's violence didn't bother me. I never took my work home with me. And it wasn't like I had to keep anything secret from my wife. She was a civilian police employee and knew what I faced every day when I left home. The sad truth was I had grown somewhat oblivious to the chaos and carnage during my relatively short time on the job.

Three

Forensics

Detective James (Bugs) Little was one of the Forensic Ident Officers called out to the riverfront. That's what crime scene technicians were called back then, when technology and skills were much more limited. Bugs laughs now at how he obtained his credentials via a correspondence course. Online sites back in those days had more to do with hanging laundry.

The detective honed his skills in latent evidence. All fingerprints had to be examined by eye versus modern day computers. He eventually was sent off to Ontario Police College to acquire formal forensic training but only after being called into work on a day off to handle his first murder investigation. That was the on-the-job training thing...again.

Bugs, armed with only his department-issued flashlight and a van understocked by prior shifts, searched the waterfront crime scene for evidence and any physical clues that might lead to discovering the identity of the attackers. There wasn't much to go on, only smudged footprints in the sticky, gooey mud, pieces of glass from smashed beer bottles, traces of blood, and the tip of a broken fishing rod.

It wasn't the grizzliest crime scene Detective Little ever witnessed. He'd been called to stabbings and shootings where he had to

examine the carnage done to one human being by another. Blood and guts didn't appear to bother him. Like many other veteran cops, it was something you simply got used to.

Perhaps having been shot at years earlier, while on patrol, helped him become immune to blood and gore. Bugs and his partner, Goggles, (both active members of the competitive revolver & pistol team) responded to a 'shots fired' call in a school yard late one night. They located the shooter, but not before Bugs took a gunshot blast to his shoulder. He fell to the ground and frantically searched the darkness for the shooter and his partner. Having lost sight of Goggles, the wounded cop didn't want to shoot the wrong man if he returned fire through the billows of fog cover. Another shot rang out and gave away the gunman's position. Bugs found his partner and the man who'd shot him. They were both still alive.

The shooter turned the gun on himself after gunning down Little. Was it a suicide by cop gone wrong? No one will ever know. As luck would have it the shotgun pellets that hit Bugs were of a small caliber, and the thick winter uniform coat he wore absorbed much of the impact, hindering penetration. It could have been much worse.

The shooter's lawyer dragged out the trial date past the end of his prior probation order. He had already been charged with possession of a loaded handgun. The learned Judge doubled the new probation period in hopes of a lesson learned from his self-inflicted gunshot wound. Both officers were rewarded with departmental commendations for not returning fire. Bugs (Bunny) earned his nick name for being a fast runner but not quick enough to outrun a speeding bullet.

Conditions at the Detroit riverfront crime scene improved a bit when the bomb truck arrived and set up artificial lighting. It was after midnight and the dark and moonless sky did nothing to aid the detective's search. The floodlights may have hindered more

than they helped, casting shadows on the uneven ground near the water's edge.

Collecting physical evidence at a crime scene is meticulous and sometimes tedious work. It was like working on a jigsaw puzzle with the same-colored pieces. Bugs plucked jagged beer bottle glass from the mud, examining each piece with his flashlight for any evidence of fingerprints, not knowing if they belonged to the victims or their attackers. He bagged a few samples for further investigation and comparison.

The specialist found a couple of shoe impressions near the water's edge and he broke out the plaster to make some casts. The lack of forensic equipment and accessible fresh water had him dipping into the polluted river for liquid to mix the powdered concoction. Wondering if contamination would present an evidentiary problem down the road, the detective was left with little choice. He obtained two decent casts of running shoe impressions.

Detective Little seized the piece of broken fishing rod and considered the small pools of blood on the ground where he casted the foot impressions. He took photographs of everything that showed evidence of the vicious assault. As far as Bugs knew, there were no witnesses. If that proved to be true, the case would have to be built on circumstantial evidence.

Follow-up

There was little information regarding the suspects, with only vague descriptions from the victims to go on. A team of detectives interviewed staff and patrons at Bronson's but were unable to gain any further leads. There were no other businesses or homes anywhere near the tavern, leaving investigators no one else to canvas. The father/son duo who were fishing in the area earlier, neither came forward nor were they identified.

Another team of detectives attended the hospital and re-interviewed both victims, but once again they received no viable leads on the suspects. Walter and Jack were both cognitive and shared the same story. They said their assailants were younger, but it was dark and they couldn't accurately describe and didn't know the names of the men who attacked them. The late-night investigation earned the detectives lots of overtime but zilch in the way of information that might get them any closer to apprehending the attackers.

While the fishermen were patched up and started their long road to recovery, the cloak of darkness thinned to reveal a new day. With the dawning light came new information, a tip gave investigators something to go on. In a case that had quickly gone stagnant, excited detectives on the day shift followed up on the fresh lead.

A thirteen-year-old girl found a wallet and some keys behind a fence and near a hedge, while she walked along Peter Street with her two brothers on their way home from church. There were papers and a photograph, but no money in the wallet. The girl brought it home and showed her mother, who called police. The wallet and keys were found about a mile from where the fishermen were attacked.

The recovered billfold belonged to Walter. It had been discarded in a populated residential area, potentially giving investigators new angles to work. All they had to do was canvass hundreds of people who lived in the congested west end neighborhood.

Reinforcements were called in and a door-to-door search began. Detectives and uniformed officers walked and knocked. They got lucky again. One resident told police he tried to help two young men change a flat tire the same night as the attack. Their car had been near where the young girl found the wallet. The Good Samaritan gave detectives a description of the vehicle and they broadcasted it citywide.

Later that same day, patrol officers spotted a car matching the description provided by the Peter Street resident. It was located downtown at the corner of Brant and Louis. Detectives were called and they staked out the vehicle, waiting for the driver and/or occupants to return. Police didn't have to wait long; three people showed up.

The cops moved in and questioned the trio. As a result of individual conversations, investigators felt two were potential suspects and they were taken to police headquarters for further questioning. One man was identified as James Daniels, twenty-three years of age, a Windsor resident.

Detectives put the screws to both men and Daniels ended up confessing. He pointed the finger at his friend, Carl Evans, saying he was the one who wielded the tire iron and beat the elder fishermen. Evans was still at large. The other man brought in with Daniels was also questioned. He denied any involvement in the vicious assault but was willing to share what he knew about the attack.

That man led police to a fishing rod with the tip broken off. It matched evidence recovered at the crime scene by Detective Little. The rod was identified as belonging to one of the assault victims, Walter Rawlings.

Using information and evidence gathered so far, detectives obtained a search warrant for a house on Louis Avenue. It was owned by a woman who admitted her brother, Carl Evans, lived there. She said he washed the clothes he was wearing when he came home late the previous night. The sister also turned over a pair of his sneakers. During a search of the house police recovered a white painter's hat with red lettering on it, like what the victims described as being worn by one of their attackers.

As a result of all evidence gathered, Carl Evans was arrested and taken to police H.Q. for further questioning. He and Daniels were each charged with two counts of attempted murder.

Four

Afterlife

A lot happened with the fishermen's case while I was on my day off. It wasn't until returning to work for the Monday afternoon shift that I learned of the arrests. Assigned a different partner, it was just another day on the front lines for me. More routine calls; a B & E, disorderlies, neighbor trouble, a theft, an alarm, and a few traffic violations. The night was busy enough we had to stay late and work overtime. That was the job.

I couldn't help but replay the previous shift's tragedy in my head and repeat it to my new partner. Having seniority similar to mine, he wasn't surprised. I also had a brief discussion with my father about the vicious assault. He dropped by the house to run a few boards through my planer. Work was something I rarely discussed with family, but he heard about it on the news.

We had recently been to Manitoulin Island for our annual boys fishing trip. I think he was somehow trying to look for common denominators. I quickly pointed out there weren't any. These were the kind of fucked-up individuals I met and dealt with on a daily basis. Having his own brush with the law during his union days, my dad only nodded slightly, as he gave the freshly planed board a once over.

Things were much different for James Daniels and Carl Evans. They were denied bail and their new place of residence was the Essex County Jail. The viciousness of the alleged attack was enough for the presiding judge to remand them into custody. Jack Miller failed to pick either of the duo out of a lineup but reiterated he and Walter never knew the identity of their assailants.

The lives of the two fishing buddies would never be the same. Walter's jaw was broken in two places, and wired closed for several weeks. Both cheek bones were broken, and he had a steel plate inserted into his face. He required numerous stitches to close wounds on his forehead, scalp, and back of his head. The ear that was ripped in half, had to be sewn back together. He spent a total of thirteen days in the hospital.

Jack's head injuries were just as severe, causing him never-ending headaches and nausea, and he could no longer work with heights. He had nightmares, trouble sleeping, and never felt safe again when he went fishing. The two men remained friends but rarely talked about the night they were beaten, robbed, and left for dead.

Bail

About two months after the attempted murder case, I was assigned to Provincial Courtroom #3, as Court Officer, on the day shift. My duties included shuffling prisoners from Windsor Police cells to the Provincial Court building across the street via an underground tunnel. Persons in custody were also brought in from the County Jail to appear in court for remand and trial dates.

In Canada, our criminal justice system says everyone is innocent until proven guilty. It didn't matter Carl Evans was allegedly responsible for a vicious assault where he almost killed someone. He had the right to a fair trial. And while awaiting their trial, everyone has a chance to apply for bail.

Evans succeeded and was released from custody. He was back on the street while he awaited his day in court. Part of my job as Court Officer was to keep track of cases on the daily court docket. I plucked prisoners from their cells and brought them into the courtroom where they answered to their charges. In addition to those in custody, I had a list of people, who had outstanding warrants, and who were also scheduled to appear that day.

Imagine my surprise when I saw Carl Evans's name on my warrant list. I knew he was no longer in custody. As promised when originally released, he showed up for his court appearance. I arrested him on site for the outstanding warrants. He was arraigned on the new charges and his freedom was put on hold once again. I smiled and walked him back through the revolving doors of justice.

Five

Preliminary Inquiry

In Canada, anyone arrested and charged with an indictable offence (serious crime such as attempted murder) is entitled to a trial by either a superior court judge alone or a judge and jury. And in our justice system a preliminary inquiry may be ordered, where the Crown must prove there is enough evidence to proceed to trial.

While the fishermen suffered in silence, their attackers enjoyed free accommodations in a safe cell that served them three squares a day. It took about a year for Daniels and Evans to appear in court for their preliminary hearing. Unlike a full-blown trial, the Crown Attorney must present enough evidence to convince a judge there is reason for a criminal trial.

Testimony from Rawlings and Miller alone should have been enough to convince the judge to send the matter to Superior Court, but neither victim could identify their attackers in a police lineup, giving Defense Counsel reason to question their story. But enough physical evidence was produced to bolster the fishermen's story and the case was committed for trial.

Jury Trial

The wheels of justice move about as quickly as a glacier, it was another year before the attempt murder/robbery case came to court. Pre-trial motions dragged on for a full day, before jury selection could begin. The two Defense Lawyers were well seasoned, and tried to put up various roadblocks, once again bringing up the lack of identification of their clients by the victims.

After witnessing various jury trials, I always felt they were a crap-shoot with about a 50-50 chance of a conviction. One thing that irked me is how little of the actual case the jury gets to hear while in session. There are too many times when they are removed from the courtroom while the crown and defense counsels argue whether certain evidence is prejudicial to the accused.

An example is how someone's criminal record cannot be introduced unless they take the witness stand. Only then can the crown ask questions about past crimes and behavior. The jury can't hear about any previous convictions because it is considered prejudicial, and their opinions could be tainted. That is our system—criminals have more rights than their victims.

Jury selection for the case took another full day. The Assistant Crown Attorney trying the case was a seasoned veteran who was earmarked to take over the top spot one day. The Crown presents their case first, selecting which order to call witnesses to tell a story the common lay person can understand. Juries are not filled with rocket scientists.

Jack Miller died shortly after the preliminary inquiry and wasn't available for the jury trial. The Crown presented previous transcript testimony Jack had given earlier, under oath. He was never the same after the attack, but it is unknown if he died from complications from the vicious assault or asbestos poisoning contracted from his previous place of employment.

Miller's earlier testimony was read into the record. It said he saw nothing of what happened to his friend but heard the attack. He was forced to lie down at knife point, his hands and feet were bound with fishing line, and then he was knocked unconscious by blows from a tire iron. He was robbed of his watch, wallet, and about three hundred dollars in fishing gear.

"I'll never forget it as long as I live," stated Jack. He was told not to move and turn his head away from Walter. "He had a knife to my throat. I heard the wumps and Wally saying, 'Why are you doing this?' The man kept telling him to shut up."

Walter was the first witness called to the stand. He recounted for the jury how he and his friend went fishing along the Detroit River two years earlier, and encountered two unknown men. They shared a case of beer with the strangers while they fished, and according to Walter, the night was uneventful until it got dark. He helped one of the young men untangle his fishing line. Rawlings returned to his spot and was about to pick up his rod when he was struck hard in the face.

He thought it was a rock, but he saw the second blow coming—it looked like a tire iron. He lost consciousness and woke up to find his hands and feet bound with fishing line. Trying to raise his head, he was struck again. When the victim regained consciousness, he was being rolled into the dark water of the river. Bobbing to the surface, Rawlings saw a silhouetted figure standing over him, holding something over his head.

"Die you bastard." The man shouted at him before throwing a large rock or chunk of cement. The injured fisherman said he wasn't sure if he blacked out again but thought he was going to die. He struggled to get free of the fishing line and in doing so, sliced off part of his right index finger. It was all a blur after that. Somehow, he was able to swim to shore and eventually make his way on foot to Bronson's Tavern.

My partner and I were called to court as witnesses but since we both saw the same thing, only he was called to the stand. Farmer testified as to Walter's condition when we found him behind Bronson's and how we located Jack as he was fleeing the area in his car. He further described the poor physical condition in which we found both fishermen.

Detective Little testified next, telling the court about forensic evidence he collected at the scene. He described how fingerprints found on the broken beer bottles matched those of the two accused. None of the latent fingerprints collected belonged to the victims. He also testified as to how the soles of the running shoes seized from Evans's residence matched the plaster casts of imprints he had taken at the site of the attack. He was required to provide qualifications as an expert witness in the area of pattern identification, but the court challenge was waived by Defense Councils.

Expert testimony is not automatic and is decided in each court appearance. Witnesses cannot testify as an expert unless accepted by Court Counsels, or where the Court challenges the witness in a 'voir dire' (trial within a trial). Otherwise, the testimony is not considered an expert opinion. I went through the process several times when I worked in the Drug Squad and was qualified as an Expert in Opiates, Cocaine, and Marijuana.

Under cross-examination by the Defense, Bugs admitted he couldn't be one hundred percent sure the running shoes were an exact match to the impressions taken. He was committed to the scientific rule dealing with conclusions. Regardless his gut told him the shoes and casted footprints matched.

As an Expert, Detective Little was able to compare individual characteristics. Things such as damage resulting from wear marks, dragging of footwear, foreign impediments adhered to the footwear, etc., would cause additional identifiable criteria making the shoe prints specific. An expert's opinion is not a yes or no conclusion.

Final decisions are made by the Court and in turn recommended to the Jury.

Sadly, when Bugs was at the scene of the crime, he had to use dirty river water to mix his casting solution. One footprint cast matched Carl Evans's shoe so closely the Crown attorney emphasized to the Jury and the Court the shoe comparisons were likely the same, while a similar conclusion could not be drawn for James Daniels's footwear. The Defense couldn't challenge the comparison between the recovered broken tip and fishing rod belonging to Walter Rawlings.

The Crown also called thirteen-year-old Trisha Monroe to the witness stand. She told the Court how and where she found the wallet identified as belonging to one of the victims. It was the same location another private citizen tried to help two men change a flat tire on their car. The man supplied police with a description of that vehicle.

Detective Desmond testified how he and his partner staked out the suspect vehicle after it was located by uniformed patrol officers. He told the court two males were arrested when they returned to the car, James Daniels being one of them. The Detective described Daniels's confession in which he implicated his partner, Carl Evans. Evans was later arrested at his residence.

Evans's sister took the witness stand and testified how her brother came home late on the night of the attack and washed his clothes. The woman also admitted she gave detectives a pair of her brother's sneakers. Desmond said they seized the clothes Evans had been wearing and found a white painter's hat with red writing while searching the house.

Both Defense Counsels for the two accused challenged most of the evidence and witnesses but declined to put either of their clients on the witness stand, as is their right. It didn't help that Daniels had confessed and accused Evans of wielding the tire iron. Putting either of the men on the witness stand to refute that would have opened a

whole new can of worms. The jury found both men guilty and the case was put over for sentencing.

Almost two and a half years after the assault, James Daniels and Carl Evans were sentenced to multiple penitentiary terms for attempted murder and robbery. They were twenty-four and twenty-five years old at the time. Evans was given eight years for the attempted murder of Walter, and five years for the attempted murder of Jack. He was also given another four years for the robberies

Daniels got seven years for aggravated assault on Walter and one year for the aggravated assault on Jack. He was given an additional five years for the robberies

When you add up all those sentences, it sounds like a lot of years. It is not. In his infinite wisdom, the judge ordered all sentences be served concurrently. That means all the lesser convictions are served at the same time as the longest one. They were also given a five-year weapons prohibition, to commence after their release.

The Crown Attorney was not happy, having asked for sentences twice as long for the unprovoked viciousness of the attacks. In considering all the violence, suffering, and recurring pain the victims experienced, the Judge justified his more lenient sentence. He surmised, "Notwithstanding the severity of their injuries, they were not life-threatening." To add insult to injury the Judge continued, "It seems to me the prospects of rehabilitation of the guilty are good."

Six

The Aftermath

Who would ever expect a fishing tale to become such a horror story? Why did Daniels and Evans turn on two elder fishermen relaxing by the river, drinking beer? Was it a simple case of robbery, a chance to steal a few bucks and some fishing gear? Does there have to be a reason? It would seem not since none was ever given. Did Daniels simply follow his friend's lead? It seems to be the way of the world today, an example of humanity at its worst.

Where is justice for the two fishermen? Sadly, Jack died before he could face his attackers in court and see them whisked off to jail. How did Walter feel when the judge said his injuries weren't life threatening? Would he make the same stupid remark if *he* was beaten, bound and tossed in the river to die? Probably not. What if he had to endure the pain of having steel plates inserted into his jaw, wearing dentures, having no feeling in the left side of his face, suffering a damaged equilibrium, and living with recurring headaches and nightmares?

But the learned Judge said, "The sentence must reflect the abhorrence of the public for this brutal, senseless beating and deter anyone who might think about getting involved in a similar incident." Such strong words, yet he rejected the 'magnitude' of the sentence sought by the Crown because the prospects of rehabilitation were good. That assumption is laughable.

It is unfortunate our justice system doesn't allow the jury to sentence the accused, once found guilty. I have no doubt in a case like this they would lock them up and throw away the key.

As a police officer, I witnessed atrocities such as this and many far worse throughout my career. Some people cannot comprehend the cruelty one human can do to another. To those of us working the frontlines every day, it is a sad fact of life.

The End

The Hadfields & McKays

One

Old Friends

My wife said one of her old west-end neighborhood girlfriends was coming over for a visit. The two women hadn't seen each other in years and thought it would be a good idea to get together while she was visiting from out of town.

Although retired from the Windsor Police Service for several years, I remembered the family by reputation. My mind immediately raced, picturing the area of Windsor where they grew up. Bloomfield Road near what later became one of the most troublesome housing projects in the city. My wife moved out when she was around five, so she didn't have a chance to experience the neighborhood the way I did as a police officer.

Her friend was a McKay, one of the eight siblings she hung out with as a child. I was personally involved in arrests of three of the McKay brothers for drug-related charges in the early nineties. Donna and I had never officially met, but she knew I was a cop, and I figured it was only a matter of time before the topic of my profession and her brothers came up.

I joined the women on our patio, while they sipped on wine and reminisced. Donna asked about my writing, saying she was a fan of my crime novels, especially the one about the Highway of Tears. The

conversation somehow evolved and found us discussing her family and the murder of her older brother, Michael.

Memories flooded my mind while we each disclosed bits and pieces of what we recalled. Her brothers were no strangers to the Windsor Police, a relationship in which each side had no use for the other. It wasn't that the McKays were violent or hardened criminals. It was more the case of boys being boys and causing just enough shit to get them in trouble with the law.

I couldn't be sure of dates at the time but recalled busting Michael for selling weed on two separate occasions. It was almost funny, in a way, talking about arresting someone for dealing a narcotic that was now legal. One must wonder how many gazillions of dollars our government spent trying to rid society of what was once called the gateway drug.

One of my first confidential informants in the Drug Squad said Michael McKay was dealing marijuana from his residence on Baby Street. She added that cheque day, when social assistance money was dished out, was the best time to raid his house. The CI said Mike always stocked up in anticipation of sales, and everyone visited him right after receiving their government handouts.

Up to that point, the informant had only given me nice-to-know stuff so I was not sure how good the information was. To use a tip when applying for a search warrant, an informant must be proven reliable. It is considered before the warrant can be signed by a Justice. So far, the CI had only proven herself competent in baking me apple pie and chocolate chip cookies. Luckily, another drug cop had more dirt on McKay.

I completed the necessary paperwork and got a warrant to search Michael McKay's residence on cheque day. There were four other men in the house when he was arrested. We found enough marijuana to charge McKay with possession for the purpose of trafficking. We seized weigh scales and a debt list to support the sales aspect of the

offence. One of the men in the house that day was shot years later with Michael, when he was killed.

I pictured a second incident in my mind, in ninety-five, when I searched Michael McKay's house again for weed. He was arrested for trafficking again, along with his live-in girlfriend. I will never forget that day when we broke open the front door of his residence. We found McKay's young son hiding in the bathtub in the upstairs bathroom. The child said his father told him to hide there if he ever heard gun shots or trouble downstairs.

Donna and I talked about Denny and Bobby, two of her other brothers who I also had contact with while on the job. We raided their houses for narcotics too. At the time, I believed drug dealing was the family business.

While searching Bobby's house we found a binder full of newspaper clippings and letters sent to the mayor and chief of police, along with articles and complaints about political and police abuse of power. The search of Denny's place resulted in a boatload of drug charges. He had small quantities of every illegal street drug known to man, most of which I believed was for his own use.

And the man had a sense of humor. A couple months after his arrest I got a call from a traffic cop about Denny's car being illegally parked on the street near his residence. The man thought he might be exempt from the bylaw if he displayed my business card on the dashboard inside his windshield.

Donna laughed and said she was aware of her brothers' interactions with the law. But she took pride in the fact she and her sisters were good girls, like my wife. It was my turn to chuckle because I heard enough stories to know my bride wasn't always the little princess everyone thought she was.

Two

Scarred for Life

The patio conversation shifted to travel and we talked about places we had been, and what destination was next on our bucket list. I offered some input but my mind was still on how Michael McKay was murdered. I was on the job at the time and heard about it, but wondered how his family dealt with such a thing. Donna seemed to have gotten past it.

What about Michael's kids? His daughter was home at the time of the murder, hiding somewhere upstairs. Someone said Tara hid in the bathtub, like she and her brother had been instructed to do years earlier. The girl was twelve when her dad was killed. Not yet an adult, but at the age where she understood much more than a child. One minute your father's watching television with friends and the next he is dead on the living room floor. How does a twelve-year-old process that?

From what I heard from police and family sources, Tara McKay heard gunshots but waited until the house was quiet before she crept downstairs and called out to her dad. Seeing him and his two friends motionless on the floor and bleeding profusely, she ran out of the house to get help. Her little brother was visiting his mother and not home at the time.

The family matriarch, Mother McKay, loved all her children. She had six of her own from her first marriage and inherited two from her second. Mom had heard rumors about one of her own molesting one of the Hadfields. She knew it couldn't be Michael because he was too young at the time.

As the story goes, old man Hadfield was on his deathbed when he told his sons a McKay had molested them twenty years earlier. Mother McKay knew their stepfather had molested two of her own, but she had no knowledge of it happening to any of the Hadfields. Before their dying father dropped the bomb, Michael McKay and Jerry Hadfield were best buddies.

The feud started around 1990, after hearing their father's deathbed story. The Hadfield brothers later broke into Denny McKay's house and viciously beat him with a table leg. They were arrested and convicted in 1993 for that crime, before I busted Michael for trafficking. There had also been threats and other confrontations between the Hadfield and McKay brothers.

Although never proven, it was believed Jerry Hadfield shot at Bobby McKay's house. I remembered hearing about a similar incident at Sammy Carter's house. Jerry Hadfield was a person of interest in that investigation. Thinking about these occurrences, I started to connect the dots in my head. Did Jerry escalate from shooting at houses to people?

The Job

As a police officer, no matter how much you might hate, dislike, or disrespect another person or criminal you have dealt with in the past, you still have a job to do when duty calls. I was working in Street Crimes in 1997, when I heard about the shooting at Michael McKay's house. Being a cop, who had raided his home and arrested him twice for trafficking, I naturally assumed the murders were drug related.

Word of a suspect got out, and Jerry Hadfield was arrested for the murder of Michael McKay and Donny Avery and the attempt murder of John LaJoy. But as the investigation moved forward, rumors of the long-standing feud emerged, between the Hadfield and McKay families.

Although it really didn't matter to most cops that bad guys were knocking each other off, they still had to work the case. To prove motive, means, opportunity, and solve the crime. Personal feelings did not factor into it. Homicide is the worst thing one human can do to another. It's a top priority for police investigators who pull out all the stops to solve the mystery.

I was on duty the day after the shooting so I paid a visit to my CI who gave me the original tip on Michael McKay. The aroma of fresh-baked cookies greeted me at her front door. I smiled. The phone call warning her of my visit paid off in fresh baked goods. My diet was left outside the door of her apartment. She said the whole

neighborhood was abuzz with the double murder that happened only two blocks from her apartment.

She also assumed the shooting had something to do with drugs; an outstanding debt or rip-off. I nodded in agreement, having no reason to disagree and unable to verbally respond because of a mouthful of cookie dough. News to me at the time, my CI mentioned the on-going family feud between the Hadfields and McKays. I asked but she didn't know when the troubles began or how long it had been a thing.

C.S.I. Guy

My informant gave me a bag of cookies to go. Just what I needed on my low carb diet. As I rounded the corner near the McKay house, I thought about re-gifting them to the lonely patrol cop who was guarding the crime scene. I waved and was about to pull over but was cut off by a pizza delivery car. Barely giving me a glance, the young constable probably assumed I was another gawker. He was engaged in conversation with his radio microphone.

My friend, Henry (Harley) Davidson, exited the front door of the McKay house and headed to the pizza guy. I had to laugh. Harley was a bit taller and broader than me, with a similar appetite. After being on scene collecting forensic evidence all day, he must have gotten hungry and ordered a pizza. I pulled in behind the delivery car, oblivious to the neighbors who were watching and waiting for who-knows-what?

Davidson was a Forensic Specialist, what we called, Identification Officers, back then. He spotted me after paying for his pie. Harley shrugged as he approached my driver's window. "Gotta eat...been a long night—day, whatever..."

"Building up the OT bank for Christmas?"

"You betcha."

"I busted Mike twice for dope. What can you tell me that won't get you in shit?"

Harley smiled. "What'd ya hear?"

"Three shots...McKay and Avery DOA, LaJoy alive in the hospital. Dicks are looking for Jerry Hadfield."

"That's the gist of it...McKay got it by the bar in the living room and it looks like Avery tried to make it to the back door...went down in the kitchen. LaJoy was in the living room too...blood pool on the carpet, but he was gone before we got here. Don't think we'll find any evidence here on the shooter...he was in and out and masked at the time."

Kit Kat Kenny stuck his head out the front door of the McKay residence, eyeballing Harley, and me. He acquired the nickname for his addiction to chocolate bars. The guys joked that he should buy shares in the Hershey company. Kenny was Harley's partner and by the concerned expression on his face, he was either hungry or curious why his partner was gone so long.

Before Harley turned to go, I reached out the window with my bag of goodies. "Here's dessert...fresh baked...I know how you and Kenny hate chocolate."

Harley put the cookies on the pizza box and stuck his nose in the top of the bag. There was no reason to speak, his toothy smile said it all. "You're the best, Norm."

It wasn't until many years later, when I decided to write about Michael McKay's murder, that Harley filled me in on the details of his forensic investigation. It was, after all, public record and he was not giving away any secrets. Davidson was in the office when him and Kit Kat got called out to the crime scene. Uniformed officers and detectives were already there. Plenty of gawkers stood outside the police tape keeping them away from the house.

The forensic specialists cleared the home so they could video and photograph the scene. Two of the three victims' bodies were still

there on the floor, where they dropped. Harley and Kit Kat took a closer look before the coroner attended and ordered the deceased to the morgue.

A witness had reported the masked suspect entered the front door, fired three shots, and left the same way. Davidson said it appeared the bullet that struck Michael McKay passed through him and entered the wall, but it was never recovered. Donny Avery was mortally wounded in the same fashion. When his body was moved, they found the bullet had passed through him. It was recovered from the black and white tile floor and sent for ballistic testing as well as blood DNA.

We shared a laugh about the Inspector who thought he was important enough to ignore the Constable guarding the house. He cut through the sealed crime scene tape so he could have a look around. His curiosity led to a serious ass chewing by the bosses above him. This is the same man who fought for an early retirement age, then threatened to sue and wanted to stay on when it was his time to go.

Harley said ballistics came into play convicting Jerry Hadfield, after they proved the bullet found near Avery's body matched the slug recovered from the shooting at Sammy Carter's house. The defense counsel hired their own ballistics expert who met Davidson at the CFS in Toronto. He was allowed to do his own independent tests on the recovered slug but declined to share his opinion.

Davidson told the independent expert it was nice to meet him and would see him back in Windsor when the matter went to court. The man said he would deliver his expert opinion to defense counsel but it was unlikely they would meet again in court. His statement to Harley was an acknowledgement he agreed with the CFS expert's opinion on the bullets and gun they came from.

Three

Making the Case

By now, most of us have heard on television or in the movies, the first forty-eight hours are the most crucial part of a criminal investigation; when physical evidence and witness memories are fresh, before being corrupted in any way. The full range of police resources is thrown into finding a suspect, making an arrest, and building a case.

The crime scene at Michael McKay's residence didn't yield much in respect to forensics, except for the lone bullet. Not possessing the necessary equipment or an expert in ballistics, Windsor Police sent the projectile to the Center of Forensic Sciences in Toronto for proper testing. That is where they matched the slug to the one taken from Sammy Carter's house.

In the Carter incident, an unidentified man armed with a handgun shot at four men out front of the residence, narrowly missing them. The bullets struck the house, leaving holes in the exterior siding. A witness wrote down the license plate of the gunman's vehicle, later traced to Jerry Hadfield. He was charged with four counts of attempted murder and associated gun charges in relation to that incident, said to be a dispute with former friends.

We all know how the Canadian justice system works and Hadfield was released on bail. He was awaiting his day in court for the Carter caper when he was arrested for the murders at Michael McKay's house. Considered persons of interest because of the ongoing family feud, police scoured the west side in search of the two Hadfield brothers.

A patrol officer found Jerry on a payphone at a local convenience store. He said he was speaking to his mother who told him he was wanted by police. She had been alerted by another woman who heard about the manhunt on her police scanner. It was only two hours after the shooting when he was brought in for questioning.

Detectives interrogated Jerry Hadfield extensively but they had nothing to put him at the McKay residence at the time of the shooting, and released him with no charges. He was swabbed for gunshot residue, and his leather coat was sent to the CFS in Toronto for further GSR testing. No weapon or any other physical evidence was recovered from the crime scene.

The investigation dragged on and the Windsor Police Services Board offered a $10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest in the murder case. Things finally turned in favor of the police through Crime Stopper reports, and the results from the CFS on the potential evidence they tested. Although no weapon had been recovered yet, it was determined a handgun was used to kill Michael McKay and Donny Avery.

Investigators were tight-lipped about information they received from a confidential informant who was close to those involved in the shooting. That person was able to lead detectives to a shed at a west-end residence where a revolver was found.

Physical Evidence

The motive for the unprovoked attack could only be speculated at the time. Two things were known for certain: the ongoing feud between the Hadfields and McKays, and Michael being a known supplier of marijuana. Rumors continued to circulate it was a drug rip gone wrong. That would explain the mask, but why shoot all three men if Jerry was only seeking revenge for alleged child abuse? Questions remained unanswered.

Test results from the CFS continued to roll in. They confirmed the slugs recovered from the McKay and Carter houses were fired from the same weapon; the revolver recovered from the shed on the west-end. The gunshot residue tests on Jerry Hadfield and his coat sleeve came back positive. His fate was all but sealed.

Lone Survivor

The lone survivor, John Lajoy, couldn't shed any additional light on the shooting when hé recalled the events of that fatal night. He admitted he was smoking marijuana and watching television with Donny Avery and Michael McKay, when a man wearing a balaclava walked into the residence, pulled a gun out of his pocket, and started firing at them.

According to Lajoy the first shots were aimed at McKay but Avery tried to intercede and was shot. That part of his story was contradicted by physical evidence, mainly the position of Avery's

body where it appears he was fleeing the living room and heading for the back door. Lajoy was shot next and spent the next couple of months recovering in the hospital.

Having a previous criminal record himself, Lajoy admitted Michael McKay had been his drug dealer and supplied him with marijuana for at least ten years. He knew who Jerry Hadfield was but couldn't identify him as the shooter and he made no mention of the ongoing family feud.

Four

The Trial

If I had to choose one thing that irked me the most in my thirty-one plus years of police service, it was the inadequacies of our judicial system. As a police officer, it was all too easy to presume someone was guilty of a crime when you caught them red-handed committing it. Even then, a case had to be built to prove their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. And I was amazed on more than one occasion how a good defense attorney could steer the court to find that doubt.

I learned telling the truth and testifying under oath was not always enough to secure a conviction, even in cases I thought were cut and dried. The accused could lie and offer complete bullshit during their testimony. I was forced to master the art of stretching the truth to make my testimony sound better than the bogus tale weaved by the defense.

My baptism by fire was during a trial for my first impaired driver, where I thought my testimony was direct and honest. When my partner relayed his version of the events, with some embellishment and a more colorful narrative, I wondered if we were talking about the same arrest. When the defense counsel pointed out I didn't

know the difference between being impaired or intoxicated, the case was dismissed.

I also learned how fickle juries could be, partly because they can be confused by complexities in law, but mostly because they are continually excused from the courtroom and not allowed to hear any evidence that might be prejudicial to the accused. Regardless of what they might think about the person or their alleged crime, they can only consider facts in evidence to agree on a unanimous verdict.

I saw cases where there was collusion between judges and defense lawyers who vacationed together, and other instances where judges steered juries in the direction they wanted. In one drug case I was involved in, the jury was polled individually to verify they'd come to a unanimous decision of acquittal. One female juror was so upset after being forced into the decision she fainted right in court.

When the woman came around, she stated out loud what had happened behind closed doors. The judge cleared the courtroom. Regardless of the conflicted verdict, the judge upheld the acquittal and dismissed the case. The Federal Crown Attorney was extremely upset and after his boss declined to appeal the decision, he resigned.

Peanut Gallery

In April of 2000, the courtroom was filled with the usual spectators; police officers involved in the case, witnesses, reporters, family and friends of the victims and the accused, Jerry Hadfield. Because of the severity of the crime and ongoing family feud, court security was beefed up. Potential weapons-carrying suspects were frisked outside the courtroom.

I called it the peanut gallery. The rows of wooden pews, like those in a church, where folks from all walks of life gathered, but who would rather be elsewhere. My ass spent hundreds of hours riding that rock-hard oak, with no bibles or songbooks to follow

along. Sitting in court after working a midnight shift, I sometimes nodded off (not unlike a certain judge who did it all the time, even once when I was on the stand, testifying).

The Hadfield and McKay show was entertaining enough to keep us all awake. Cops whispered about the previous night's drink fest or told jokes. Family members shed tears or leered at each other. An assortment of news media busied themselves sketching or scribbling notes. They weren't allowed to take still or video images.

Witnesses

One neighbor saw a masked man go in and out of Michael McKay's house at the time of the shooting but couldn't identify him. Even John Lajoy, who was a victim, and present when his friends got shot, could not identify the intruder. He was questioned about inconsistencies in his statements to police, specifically how he said the masked man was taller and bigger than Jerry Hadfield.

He appeared confused at times while on the witness stand, saying he didn't know and it had been a while, when trying to recall if he was in the room or had heard about a separate incident in which McKay was punched in the face by another man over a dispute involving a dog. But he made no bones about telling the court how Michael was his weed dealer.

Hadfield's mother testified, telling the court she was in bed at 12:30am when her other son's girlfriend said she was monitoring the police scanner and heard the cops were searching for both her boys. The phone rang about five minutes later and Jerry said he was calling from a nearby convenience store.

About a half hour after the call to his mother, a Windsor Police Constable arrested Jerry Hadfield at the same payphone. Under questioning by detectives, he later admitted to the shooting at the

Carter house, but denied killing McKay and Avery and wounding Lajoy.

Tara McKay, Michael's daughter was in the house at the time of the shooting but could only testify to what she heard since she was hiding upstairs. She witnessed the aftermath of the double homicide before running from the house. It would stay with her for the rest of her life.

The Verdict

There wasn't the amount of courtroom drama everyone expected, although some dirty looks and nasty words were exchanged in the hallways during court recesses. Physical evidence bolstered by expert witness testimony turned out to be enough proof for the jury to convict. One juror had taken ill and removed themselves from the panel but it had no effect on their verdict.

After listening to the events of the tragic night, McKay family members were shell-shocked. Why did Jerry Hadfield shoot and kill Michael McKay? He never took the witness stand, as was his right, so no explanation was offered. Was it a drug rip-off gone bad and if so, was it necessary to shoot all three men? Many questions were not answered in court.

Murder trials are all about the production and examination of facts, things that need to be proven as such for the judge and/or a jury to consider. Long-time family feuds or payback for a sexual assault may go to motive for such a crime, but those cannot be presented as facts in evidence to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Being found guilty for the murders of Michael McKay and Donny Avery, and the attempted murder of John Lajoy, Jerry Hadfield was sentenced to life in prison. That really doesn't mean 'life' in Canada. A guy I knew from my childhood neighborhood bashed his wife's head in with a hammer and got a life sentence for her murder. He served seven years, was released on early parole, and even got his job back at the Ford Motor Company.

It may have been justice served in the eyes of the court, but the McKay family exchanged sorrowful looks and hushed comments. Jerry Hadfield's brother shouted back over his shoulder to the McKays that Michael got what he deserved. Tempers flared as the courtroom was dismissed but police kept the two families away from each other.

Five

The Appeal

In Canada, every person accused of a criminal offence has the right to a fair trial. And no matter the outcome of that trial, the Defense Counsel or Crown Attorney can appeal the court's decision to higher levels of adjudicators, namely the Supreme Court of Ontario, and lastly the Supreme Court of Canada. Jerry Hadfield appealed his conviction to the higher courts.

To file an appeal, a Defense Counsel must prove wrongdoings or errors made by the sitting judge during the original trial. Hadfield's lawyer named a few, producing dozens of case law examples to back his claim. A common reason for appeal is violating the accused's rights under our charter, something that's always debatable and a Defense Counsel's favorite argument. That was reason number one for the appeal.

The second reason for appeal was in regards to 'hearsay' evidence, testimony that was not given directly at trial, but repeated by a witness as the third person. There are exceptions to the hearsay rule, but in Hadfield's trial a previous statement by the victim was in dispute. The Crown had submitted a written statement given to police by Michael McKay, in response to a hit and run accident.

According to the police report, Jerry Hadfield struck John Lajoy while on his bicycle and left the scene of the accident. Michael McKay was there and witnessed the accident and told police that

Hadfield said to him, "That was meant for you." The Crown's purpose in producing that statement was to show intent and malice by the accused, who held a longstanding grudge with McKay.

The appeal was heard in October of 2004 and ruled on in March of 2005. The Ontario Supreme Court set Jerry Hadfield's original conviction aside and ordered a new trial.

Second Kick at the Cat

The new case came to court in September of 2006, nine years after the murder of Michael McKay. This time, during his trial for two counts of first-degree murder, Jerry Hadfield pled guilty to two counts of second-degree murder. Obviously, time served and future incarceration was discussed behind closed doors and a deal was struck.

The Superior Court Judge sentenced Hadfield to *life* in prison with no eligibility for parole for fifteen years. He further stated, "Not only were these killings brutal, they were senseless." A seven-year concurrent sentence was added for the attempt murder of John LaJoy. (Meaning the sentence is served along with the first instead of after)

In his summation the Judge told the court how Hadfield was masked and armed with a revolver when he entered the west-side home of Michael McKay, with the intent to rob the known drug dealer. Surprised to find the other two men present, the situation quickly escalated and Hadfield killed Michael McKay and Donny Avery, and seriously injured John Lajoy.

Because Hadfield had already served eight years in prison, he would be eligible for early parole in seven years. The Judge also mentioned how he was impressed by Tara McKay's victim impact statement, where she eloquently expressed the void in her life after the loss of her father. She was only twelve at the time of the murder.

Once again, the grieving McKay family had to listen to the gory details of how one of their loved one was brutally gunned down for reasons that were never fully explained. Was Hadfield trying to make the shooting look like a drug rip when he was intent on payback for the alleged child abuse by one of the McKays? Did he have any proof of who the true pedophile was? If so, their father never revealed the name, and Jerry and his brother never admitted knowing exactly who it was.

Denny McKay

In 2013 Denny McKay was sentenced to three years in prison after police seized drugs, weapons, and illegal cigarettes in his home. They found 43 cartons of smokes, about 2 kilograms of marijuana, $3,800 in cash, oxycodone, codeine, magic mushrooms, a loaded shotgun, and a drawer full of photos depicting child pornography. Was Denny the true pedophile? Did Jerry Hadfield kill the wrong McKay?

Denny's lawyer pled incompetence. He said his client was a drug addict who sold drugs to others to pay for his own habit. His client couldn't read or write and had a thing for child pornography. After doing his time for the crimes, Denny McKay was released on probation. Five months later he was arrested for drugs again, this time in Kitchener, Ontario.

The End

Victimless Crime

One

The Phone Call

I was less than five years from retirement in the summer of 2005, working as a Break & Enter Sergeant/Detective in Street Crimes. I had a small crew of Constables on my team who were assigned cases, but I could also take on investigations of my own. It was a good gig and I enjoyed the work, but retirement was something I'd thought about since the day I was hired.

Separated at the time, I dated on and off, looking for the next woman to spend the rest of my life with. Till death do us part didn't seem to work the first time around. Someone didn't hold up her end of the bargain but that's not what this story is about. It's what some call victimless crimes, the three F's: fraud, forgery and false pretense.

For me, there was a lot more to life than work; one of those four letter words. It was something I needed to do from a young age, if I was to attain the things I wanted in life, and have the means to explore the world. At some point, I became more of a traveler than a vacationer, passing over packaged all-inclusive deals for open tickets and off the beaten path destinations. More years on the job meant longer furloughs, perfect for my ambitions.

Choosing not to have children meant my wife and I could spend all our money on ourselves. Giving half of it to her as a parting gift

wasn't part of my original plan so I had to improvise and adapt to my solo situation. It was no problem travelling alone. I jumped on my bike and headed to a different point on the map each time. You don't need a partner to see the world.

Although I wasn't one for repeat trips, there was the annual fishing trip with the boys—my father, brothers, and some good buddies. We rented a cabin on Manatoulin Island in Northern Ontario for a long weekend. The trip was more about bonding and having fun than fishing, although that part made for a great fish fry.

While on the 2005 trip, I received a phone call from my old car partner and one-time good friend. He'd moved up through the ranks, becoming my boss and taking up one of the top five spots on the Windsor Police totem pole. Thinking he was doing me a favor by calling while I was on furlough, he informed me of my latest transfer.

"Thought I'd give you the good news personally, Norm," he said, "You report to Financial Crimes when you get home."

I froze, flabbergasted, with no idea how to respond. I checked the number on my cell phone to make sure the call was legit but his voice was all too familiar. My view wandered the tree line across the lake, my eyes half rolling back into their sockets. My knees felt weak, as if I'd just been kicked in the balls.

"Hello...Norm...are you still there?"

Fraud was the last place I wanted to go. I told them so on the 'Expression of Interest' forms issued by Human Resources. They created a new policy where it didn't matter how good a fit anyone was in a certain position; personnel were shuffled around every three to five years throughout the entire police service.

I spent fifteen years in a uniform, walking a beat and working patrol at both stations, and another five in plain clothes with the Drug Squad and Street Crimes. The latter earned me a promotion to Sergeant, which meant I had to return to Patrol as a Supervisor.

Six months later, I transferred back to the Drug Squad, and then back to Street Crimes, where I hoped they'd forget about me.

It was always a guessing game as to when and where 'they' decided to move someone. Much of the transfer form they had us fill out was about selecting the top three and last three places we wanted to work.

I finally answered my old partner. "Fraud was my last pick on the fucking transfer form. Intelligence, Criminal Investigations and Arson were my top choices."

"Arson works out of the Financial Crimes (Fraud) office, so that will give you a shoe in." The answer came too quickly, obviously rehearsed. I don't remember the rest of the conversation; my mind went to mush. One of my cop fishing buddies must have heard me bitching about the transfer. The expression on his face said it all. Nobody ever asked for a transfer to Fraud.

With the exception of two guys who I knew and respected in Financial Crimes, it was normally a dumping ground for dead weight or employees nobody else wanted. It was a nine to five paper-pushing desk job. I shuddered just thinking about working with the other idiots in the office. How would I ever survive being confined to a cubicle?

I was fishing captain and we loaded up the pontoon boat for a day on Lake Manitou. Although we did charters for lake trout, the boys normally liked fishing for perch. They called themselves fishermen, but most would only eat perch or pickerel. The trout and local whitefish were much stronger tasting, but I didn't mind them.

My brother dropped anchor and some baited their hooks, while others cracked cans of beer in preparation. I didn't even pick up my rod. Sitting, sulking, and staring off across the lake gave me plenty of time to think about what I might have done wrong or who I might have pissed off. I surely wasn't looking forward to being deskbound, typing fraud reports for the remainder of my career.

Word of my dilemma spread throughout our group. Seeing my foul mood, they knew enough to leave me alone, baited line or not. Even my next-youngest brother remained tight-lipped. He usually gave me shit when I didn't throw my line in, saying I couldn't share in the fish fry if I didn't catch any.

Normy New Guy

It was the last week of September 2005 when I reported for work in the Financial Crimes office. I wore a sling on my broken left arm, and carried a shitty attitude into my new place of business. I had taken a spill on my Harley after the fishing trip while on a ride along Lake Erie. It added physical to the emotional pain I brought with me.

A co-worker showed me to my desk and I attempted to sit down while he explained the job at hand. The wheels came out from under my swivel chair and I crashed to the floor. How pitiful did the new guy look, laying on the floor with a red face and damaged wing?

It took some time to regain my composure and familiarize myself with the new surroundings. To my delight, the two biggest slugs who had worked in the office were forced into retirement. Two younger officers I had worked with in the past, replaced them. I knew all the other detectives as well; six of us in total. The lone female investigator shared my dissatisfaction with her unwanted transfer. It gave us something in common to bitch about.

There was another facet to working in Financial Crimes I wasn't keen on. After working in jeans and tee shirts while in Drugs and Street Crimes I had to go shopping for office attire, meaning I'd become what everyone calls a 'suit'; a shirt and tie guy. I purchased Dockers and sport coats I could mix and match, with a few extra ties for variety.

My twenty-five years on the job made me second in seniority in the office. Even the Staff Sergeant in charge was junior to me, but now my boss. Ken Stevens politely explained how he'd already loaded some files into my work queue, hoping my addition to the team would help clear the two-year backlog of fraud cases.

I couldn't believe my ears. How the hell did they expect us to do a good job every day when the work was two years behind? It was ludicrous and only added to my depressed attitude toward the new assignment. After making sure the swivel chair was safe and secure, I settled into my new desk. I opened the work queue on my computer and saw the boss had been generous and only assigned me fifteen files to cut my teeth on.

Two

Scammers

In the next days and weeks, I expanded my vocabulary and learned of different scams and what the world of fraud was all about. Being an action junkie for most of my career, I struggled to find anything interesting about my new line of work. Bad checks, fake lotteries, stolen credit cards, forged documents, counterfeit money, and a variety of Nigerian scams. It was all foreign to me.

I noticed one thing interesting about the work—all fraudsters leave a paper trail. Like Handsel and Gretel leaving cookie crumbs for cops like me to find a way through the forest in search of justice. What could be so hard about that? It may have piqued my interest but for me it was about as exciting as watching paint dry.

I'd only been in the office a few days, when a Patrol Sergeant I knew reached out for a friend who worked at his credit union. It was a breach of privacy and she couldn't make an official complaint so she called him for advice about a client. She thought someone was taking advantage of the woman. Since he knew nothing about fraud he referred the matter to me, the new expert.

The credit union clerk told me she was concerned about an elderly customer who made large cash withdrawals in the amounts of $10k, $5k, and $13k, virtually draining her savings account. The

clerk made polite conversation with the woman, trying to discover why she was withdrawing so much of her savings. She offered no explanation.

It wasn't any of her business how the woman spent her own money but out of concern the teller followed her outside where a taxi cab was waiting. That in itself was unusual, since the woman's daughter usually drover her around for banking and errands.

I was able to obtain the daughter's name and called her to see if she was aware of what was taking place. She knew about the money, but mom told her to mind her own business. She could do whatever she wished with her own money. In the interest of the woman's safety and well-being, I picked up a female constable and we visited the elderly lady. Upon our arrival, she immediately became defensive and gave us the same speech her daughter received.

I gingerly tiptoed around the issue, explaining there were many scammers who specialized in taking advantage of the elderly. The woman took my warning as an insult and said she was perfectly cognizant and aware of what she was doing. Since we had no official complaint, I filed the matter in my personal notes.

A few months later, I received a call from the woman's daughter. She was worried sick about what she'd discovered. Apparently, her mother had received a letter from the Spanish Lottery telling her she won sixty million dollars. If she wished to collect the windfall, all she had to do was to pay the government export tax. Then came payment requests for revenue people, accountants, and lawyers who had to be paid for her to receive her winnings. That's when she started sending them money.

The woman finally explained to her daughter how she drained her bank accounts of $110,000 in attempts to retrieve the promised free money. She was distraught over the fact they wanted more from her but she was tapped out. Even though she never purchased a ticket, the victim was convinced she won the lottery and wondered

why they stopped calling when the well ran dry. She appeared to have all her faculties but neither the daughter nor I could convince the woman she'd been duped.

Politics

My boss called me into his office one day to chit-chat. He filled me in on the internal politics that brought me to Financial Crimes. Staff Sergeant Stevens was a good guy who I'd worked with many years earlier, before we took different career paths. He said I was his first choice for the Arson job because of my years of investigative experience. To his dismay his opinion didn't count when it came to filling the position.

Being my own man and not an ass-kisser, the same thing had happened to me before, when I applied for Street Crimes. The boss there said I had the job but the powers that be chose one of their golden boys instead. Their decision came back to bite them in the ass years later, when that same guy beat up a civilian while off duty, and lost his job.

Once again, the brass thought they knew best and assigned one of their pets the Arson job. It's a fairly small police service so I knew the recipient, Cam Ridley. I had no problem with him personally, but he brought zero investigative experience to a job that was all about criminal investigation. My boss said it pained him to ask, but he hoped I'd chip in to help Ridley. Stevens added it would only be a matter of time before their boy was promoted and moved on.

Trade Deals

I was about two months into my new gig when my best friend, Jesse James, called. He was a Sergeant in the Drug Squad and had a confidential informant who was looking to swap information for

bail and consideration on multiple criminal charges. Jesse said it was all about stolen credit cards, my new forte, something he knew nothing about and didn't care to.

I knew the informant from a wiretap I was involved in years earlier. Kevin Carter had a three-page record card with dozens of property-related and drug convictions. Frankly, I was a bit surprised to hear that Carter was a rat. But it wasn't the first time I'd been involved with such a hardened criminal selling his soul to save his ass. He knew how the system worked and he wanted bail so badly he would have traded his own mother for consideration.

I met with Jesse and his CI in one of our interview rooms, where we were officially introduced. I was just another cop to Carter, who surely wasn't aware that I was one of the detectives who listened to his private phone calls during the wiretap investigation. He said he had information on a credit card factory, and that he was actively involved in buying and selling stolen cards.

According to Carter, he was hooked up with a young woman who was 'skimming' credit cards at a local restaurant. In turn, he took the stolen information to a guy named Reno who lived above a variety store on the west side. Reno took the stolen data from the skimmed cards and downloaded it to his laptop. Then the stolen data was transferred onto clean credit cards.

The whole process sounded like rocket science to Jesse, but with what I had learned in a short period of time, it made sense to me. Carter went on to say Reno was in possession of 50 stolen cards, used to purchase goods such as electronics at Best Buy, where a clerk knowingly swiped stolen cards for a piece of the action. The waitress skimming the original cards traded stolen data for cocaine.

I filled two pages in my ledger book with notes from Carter and gave Jesse the nod. His CI squirmed in his chair, itching to get out of jail—probably in dire need of a fix. It was up to Jesse to convince an Assistant Crown Attorney the reason his CI should be released on

bail. While that was in the works, we took him for a ride to confirm the store address, and attempt to get a sample of one of the stolen credit cards.

Ignoring my backlog of fraud cases, now numbering twenty, I spent the whole next day sourcing and researching the information supplied by Kevin Carter. In the meantime, one of Jesse's drug investigators approached me with more dirt on the variety store on Sandwich Street. I got to work, preparing a search warrant.

Later, the same day, the cell control officer called our office about two Toronto men who were in custody for possession of stolen credit cards. Detective Rankin and I were assigned the case. Brenda and I had worked the same shift for a year as rookies, walking a beat. In later years she gained her investigative experience working in Sex Crimes.

We retrieved a rental car and the confiscated evidence from the property room: 17 cloned debit cards, and $6,920 cash—all in twenties. The interviews and reports took us well into the evening, logging several hours of overtime. The vehicle was held in a secure bay in the basement, and I prepared a search warrant to execute the next morning.

I was granted a warrant to search the rental car. We found 54 more cloned cards hidden in the headliner, and another $22,460 cash, all in twenties. The two men had been hitting bank machines across the city, using their cloned cards to drain accounts attached to them. The whole process was new to me but I quickly caught on. Financial crime paid.

I was glued to my computer the next day applying for another search warrant—this time for the store on Sandwich Street and the apartment of a man known only as Reno, who resided upstairs. We attended the address and acting on grounds contained within the warrant, arrested the store owner, Marko Nestor, for possession

of stolen property. We found Reno Navarro upstairs and arrested him too.

In Navarro's apartment, we found cloned cards, stolen cards, 2 laptops, fake ID, stolen credit card information (data), a debit machine, and card skimmers. We normally worked a steady day shift in Financial Crimes but the crew went until midnight for the second night in a row.

Working sixteen-hour shifts put a damper on my social life as a single man, but banking overtime was always fun. We had the choice to be paid cash or take time off in lieu. To help save the department budget, it only cost seven hours for an eight-hour day off. I usually took the time off to keep the taxman from taking a huge bite of overtime pay.

When I returned to work in the morning, I was advised by the sergeant in charge of the cell block Navarro wished to talk and had information to trade. I briefed the boss on the previous night's events and how I was about to have a follow-up conversation with one of the men arrested. He laughed and shook his head, saying the brass didn't know how to handle all the hours we were logging. They never had an overtime budget for Financial Crimes.

Reno supplied more information than a Wikipedia web page. He offered to share everything he knew with me on the condition he was extradited back to Romania, instead of doing time in Canada or the U.S. It wasn't that he feared our penal system—he was in the country illegally, having been smuggled across the border from the United States in the trunk of a car. He was wanted in the U.S. and afraid of being incarcerated there.

I made no promises, but told Navarro I'd speak to my contact at Immigration and see what we could do. In the meantime, he supplied me with pages of information on people and frauds that would take me weeks to decipher and follow-up. Later visits with

Reno at the County Jail allowed me time to further my education in the world of financial crime.

My new CI explained the whole skimming and cloning process, talking about MSR's, PMR's and embossers, all the electronic tools needed in the making of fake or fraudulent credit cards. I learned all relevant information is contained on the magnetic stripe (black strip) on the back of a card. Mini data skimmers can be secreted in a waitress's or bartender's apron or pocket, and a quick swipe uploads everything into their device.

The data on the skimmer (PMR) is downloaded to a computer program, which in turn transfers information to an MSR, which can be used to clean or remove existing data on the mag stripe or to encode the new stolen or cloned card. An embosser is the machine that stamps the numbers onto blank cards. Basically, the process is a transfer of data from one plastic card to another.

Navarro put more names into play, others who were like Kevin Carter, using the altered cards to go on shopping sprees until the card was maxed out. The CI spoke about Drago Borja, a Romanian kid who ran his own crew and illegally made $200k the previous year with phishing schemes and Western Union wire scams, as well as stolen credit cards. According to my source, Borja was connected to the mafia in Romanian, and other nefarious characters in Toronto where he obtained blank cards.

My new friend said that Borja bought stolen card data from his contacts in Europe, and traded some back, using a special banking software that is difficult to come by. He added that stolen cards go from Carter to himself and Borja, and sell on the street for $300 each. The latter had a friend named Mohamed who was also in on the Western Union scam.

In a final meeting with Reno Navarro at the County Jail, I introduced him to my Canada Immigration contact, who had already started the deportation process. In appreciation for a long-distance

call to his girlfriend back home, Reno offered up a bonus round of information, dropping more names and telling me where to find cloning and forging equipment.

A deal was made between Navarro, his lawyer and the Crown Attorney, where he pled guilty to the fraud charges I laid and agreed to his deportation back to Romania. A few days later he called me to say he'd arrived home safely but was keeping his distance from the local mafia, who were no doubt pissed at the loss of one of their overseas connections. As a parting gift he told me Borja owed them serious money and could get himself killed if he didn't pay up soon.

Three

Boom!

I had a houseful of immediate family on Boxing Day to celebrate Christmas. My father couldn't believe it when I got called in to work on such an occasion. Except for hosting the get together, it wasn't a big deal for me to work a holiday. During my fifteen years in the Patrol Division, I spent many Christmases, Easters, and birthdays working. Someone had to be out there keeping the streets safe.

Having no kids meant I usually worked Christmas for family guys, getting New Years Eve off in return. Our bosses tried to give us at least one stat holiday off. And in my later years in Patrol, they did their best to give us a two-hour lunch break so we could go home and eat with our family. Working, Christmas day was always quiet. New Years Eve was a different story.

My boss called from an east end coffee shop that had exploded, asking if I could help Ridley with his first major arson investigation. Chuckling to myself, I shoved a wedge of meat pie into my mouth, bagged some cookies for the guys, and told my family to finish the dishes and lock up when they left.

The old coffee shop was in my old neighborhood, close to where I grew up on the east side. It was a brick building that had been completely levelled by an explosion. Firefighters, Fire Inspectors, Gas and

Utility personnel were on the scene. There were lots of gawkers who had their houses rattled and came out to find the source. Bricks were thrown in all directions, several across all five lanes of Tecumseh Road. Luckily, traffic was light at the time and no one was injured.

My boss had been the arson investigator before he got promoted to Staff Sergeant so he knew his way around a fire scene. He introduced me to the Windsor Fire Inspector on site, and the Ontario Fire Marshal who came in from out of town. The latter was routinely called in for explosions and property losses over a million dollars.

Stevens pointed out a wax candle positioned on the floor, just inside the short exterior knee wall at the front of the coffee shop. The wall had supported large plate glass windows along the front and side of the building, before they were blown out. The explosion forced the roof up and into the air before it came back down in pieces.

Cause of the explosion was determined to be the ignition of natural gas, once it filled the building and settled onto the lit flame of the candle. We found the main gas valve tampered with, allowing the escaping gas to accumulate inside the locked coffee shop. Being lighter than air, the flammable substance filled the whole place from the ceiling down, until it reached the open flame and went kaboom. The Fire Captain who was first on the scene said the candle was still lit when he arrived.

Our investigation carried on for weeks. When not working on my fraud files, I assisted Detective Ridley with the coffee shop case. We interviewed the owner, employees, and whatever other witnesses we could come up with. The consensus among those who worked at and frequented the business was that the owner was responsible. He was last to lock up and suggested to us that someone must have broken in during the night.

There was no alarm system and no signs of forced entry, window and door locks were still intact. Our investigation into the owner

showed he had financial problems. Subsequently, he and his wife were both interviewed and questioned repeatedly. Although we couldn't prove it, instinct told me he was guilty. He later agreed to a polygraph test but it came back 'inconclusive'. That seemed to be the result every time I had someone tested. Regardless, lie detector tests are not admissible in court.

The most amazing thing that came about during our investigation was a statement from a witness who read about the explosion in the paper and agreed to come in for an interview. The man told me he went to the coffee shop after forgetting his coat inside. The business was closed when he returned so he put his face to the glass window and saw his coat on the back of a chair.

Planning to come back the next day, he returned to his car and opened the door to get in. That's when the building exploded and the concussion threw him across the front seat. When he turned to see what happened, a giant fireball came right at him. He ducked and it rolled over the top of his car, but he felt the intense heat. The man took cover and prayed as bricks rained down on his vehicle. I asked him if he bought any lottery tickets on his way home.

Four

New Informants

Whether I wanted to or not, I got back to work on my fraud cases. I continued to receive phone calls from Marko Nestor after we raided his store for stolen credit cards. He supplied me with a lot of what I call 'nice to know' information about other nefarious people he was aware of. He offered useless gossip in the hope of consideration for his criminal charges.

One day, Marko requested to chat in person so we met in a secluded park on the west end of the city. He had another man with him, introduced as his brother. They climbed into my van. I couldn't comprehend the Arabic pronunciation of the sibling's name so we agreed on 'Jimmy'. His slicked back hair and cologne reminded me of the cosmetics and fragrance isle at Sears. Appearance and cool demeanor told me he and Marko were like night and day.

Within five minutes I knew Jimmy was the brother I needed, the one to make deals with. He repeated names Reno Navarro had given me and dropped others I was both aware and unaware of. It was obvious Jimmy knew how the game was played, his new goal being to work his brother's patch—supplying me with information to get Marko's charges dropped.

The truth was I didn't have much of a case on the older brother. But they didn't have to know that. I was quite happy to put away more bad guys before he had a chance to appear in court. Jimmy gave me information on Drago Borja, his buddy Mohamad, and a guy named Drew who was in possession of a skimmer and programmer. He also talked about Bhava, a man who planned to install fraudulent chips and a hidden camera in Marko's store to capture PINs of people using his ATM.

As a show of good faith and to seal our new deal, Jimmy promised to deliver a stolen embossing machine. He asked if I wanted information on drug dealers, one particular crack dealer who I was acutely aware of from my time in narcotics. I scribbled brief notes but told him I was out of that loop and would relay his tip to someone I knew in the Drug Squad.

Research

Search warrants don't grow on trees or come as easily as you see on television or in the movies. The application or document, called an 'Information to Obtain', has to be presented to and signed by a Justice. Under the law, everyone has a reasonable expectation of privacy. A man's home is considered his castle and police need to explain why they want to breach its walls.

Reason or reasons to believe a criminal offence is taking place within a specific residence or business are required and need to be proven in the application. It is the affiant's job to convince a Justice by sourcing all information; eyewitnesses or reliable informants who pass on what they personally saw to police.

It's also laughable to real police investigators, how television cops always have immediate access to everyone's personal, telephone, and financial information with a few taps on their keyboard. All of these invasions of privacy require search warrants before any action can be taken. That means a separate application for each phone number or bank account. These things require a lot of paperwork and man hours.

My goal was to obtain search warrants for the residences of Drago Borja and Mohamad Khalil but I first had to prove each man resided at their particular residence. Any criminal records they might have would help to prove their bad character. Finally, information supplied by confidential informants had to be recent, and they themselves, had to be proven reliable in the past.

I had collected plenty of dirt on Borja. While checking police records, my search was flagged by the local RCMP. In a telephone conversation with one of their fraud investigators, he said they were too busy to follow up after Drago's father turned in his son's computer, reporting he was up to no good and might be defrauding people online.

The Mounties turned the laptop over to me and I in turn, gave it to our guy in Computer Crimes. He found files containing fake bank home pages and driver's licenses from various states in the U.S. There were also images of automatic weapons but nothing that would further my investigation. Using information from police sources and additional input from my two confidential informants, I was granted search warrants for both Borja's and Khalil's residences.

My boss was impressed by my warrant-writing skills, something I was good at, having previously written well over a hundred while in Drugs and Street Crimes. My streak was still alive. I never had a warrant refused. Having gained a reputation for pulling a rabbit out of a hat when needed, even homicide detectives once called on my expertise in an attempt to search the home of a murder suspect.

Tag Team

The trick was to search both places at once or at least arrest one individual before the other found out and tried to destroy evidence. We split the office personnel into two teams and mine hit Khalil's place first. Two other detectives sat on Borja's apartment, waiting for him to come home. Like a deflating balloon, Mohamad shriveled in our presence and admitted he was relieved we caught him. He chose to cooperate, showed us everything that was in my search warrant, and then some.

Khalil flipped like a quarter tossed at a football game. He said Borja was out of control and in deep with the Romanian mafia.

We found Mohamad in possession of $11,000 in U.S. and $200 in Canadian cash, a stack of Western Union money transfer slips, a paper cutter and laminator for making fake ID, and two cloned credit cards.

The young Lebanese man begged me to keep his American currency, saying it was earmarked for his upcoming honeymoon. I smiled, telling him his continued cooperation might go a long way to make that happen. He went on to explain the Western Union scam and how they baited buyers on sites like eBay, requesting payment through the money transfer service. Once the transaction number was obtained, they illegally intercepted the money and never delivered the product.

Khalil said Borja had a crew of young men working for him and they attended various Western Union sites in Michigan and Ontario weekly, raking in tens of thousands of dollars a month. Certain clerks blindly accepted their fake ID and allowed the money transfers, gladly accepting their commissions and not caring about the consequences.

Borja eventually arrived home with his girlfriend, a voluptuous young woman who was a magnet for wandering detective's eyes. He greeted police with a carefree attitude and cocky grin that I wanted to wipe off his face with the bottom of my size eleven shoe. The occasional shrug was the best he could muster as he watched us seize his four computers, software, $2,300 in cash, an MSR, fake U.S. passport and other ID, cloned credit cards, Western Union slips and paper cutters.

When questioned, he casually admitted to being involved in the wire transfer scam in the past, but nothing currently. We also found receipts for two more of his computers at a service store. All his personal credit cards were seized and we scanned them with a special reader in our office. I was shocked when I saw stolen credit card data contained on the back of his Ontario driver's license. The

information belonged to a woman who had her card stolen in Italy. I thought I'd seen it all, but that was not the case in Financial Crimes.

After Borja's arrest he was bailed out by his father. They came to see me at Police Headquarters and asked for the return of the computer that was turned into the RCMP. I laughed and pointed out to the father, his original suspicions about his son were obviously true. He became defensive and said it was all a misunderstanding.

My new buddy, Mohamad, later told me that old man Borja changed his tune when Drago started cutting him in on his action. Apparently, dad cared more about money than his son's crimes. In considering the reported size of the Western Union scam that was mostly taking place south of the border, I contacted the U.S. Secret Service and made arrangements to hook up with two of their agents.

Five

Pay Day

Jimmy Nestor became my most prolific informant. He was like a one-stop shopping kiosk where I could buy information on fraud, stolen cards, property, drugs, smuggling, and even prostitution. I paid many visits to investigators in Intelligence, Drugs, and Street Crimes, either sharing information or setting Jimmy up with a direct pipeline to other investigators.

He worked off his brother's charges by delivering the embosser as promised, and supplying me with a continues flow of information on some of the city's most nefarious characters. It's not that my other CIs didn't call from time to time, passing on tips on drug dealers but I was out of that game and simply forwarded tips I received.

I was plenty busy with my stack of fraud cases and the occasional arson investigation. The boss reminded me of these new job descriptions. There was only so many hours in a day and plenty of other cops to look after crime that fell outside of my purview. For an old horse who thought he'd never like fraud, I learned a few new tricks. I enjoyed the challenge.

I got to chase a new fraudster who was wreaking havoc across the city. He was scamming money by delivering fake packages—something nobody in the office had ever heard of previously. The

scammer reached out and promised to deliver a package, with an accompanying tale about its contents, such as secret information that might affect their business. I was assigned the package scam files as they came in. I dubbed the unknown suspect as the *PacMan*.

Jimmy the CI liked to gamble and worked for cash so he could play poker and visit his favorite massage parlor once a week, celebrating victories with happy endings. He said he only went to relieve stress because his girlfriend was about to calf—his words, not mine. When Jimmy's information panned out, which it always did, he received money from the police informant fund or Crimestoppers. The latter delivered larger payouts.

He called me with additional information on a guy named Drew, telling me he was in possession of skimmers and cloned cards that were hidden in the ceiling tiles of his apartment. The man also had an embosser and stolen Sony camcorder in a duffle bag near the door. When we hit Drew's place, we made a point of searching other areas of the apartment first, as not to heat up my informant. Everything was exactly where Jimmy said it would be. The search and arrest resulted in twenty-eight criminal charges and free pizza from the boss.

Continuous Circle

Mohamad Khalil stayed in touch regularly, supplying me with the names of Borja's crew of youngsters who were continuing the Western Union scam in the U.S. on his behalf. Since the crimes fell beyond my jurisdiction, I set up an introduction between my CI and the Secret Service so they could work directly, without me passing on third-hand information. He also told me about Borja's new connection, a guy named Armando, who was involved in a stolen credit card ring. The group bought stuff from JYSK through the back door.

The timing was perfect since Jimmy was also supplying me with information about Armando, saying he was Borja's new right hand and had software to transfer data between stolen and new credit cards. Armando was another Romanian kid, tied to the mafia back home where they were trading card information.

Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

I worked the PacMan case and gathered intelligence on Armando and his new crew. On July 8th I was called in for three fires, all in one night. Ridley was on vacation so I was next in line on the phone tree. Besides my beauty sleep, it's not like I would miss out on much at home. Between relationships at the time, I didn't have to explain my comings and goings to anyone but my cat.

The first fire was in Polonia Park, where evidence of arson was found in a basement apartment. The occupants were out at the time of the incident and there were signs of forced entry. With no apparent reason as to why someone would break into the private residence to set it on fire, the Fire Inspector and I decided to finish our notes over breakfast.

Before we could clear the scene, we were both dispatched to a car fire not too far away. I told my fire buddy I'd hit the drive-through at McDonald's to grab us breakfast and meet him at the new fire scene. I couldn't wait to eat. My hash browns and half the egg McMuffin were gone by the time I met up with the Fire Inspector. He was happy I didn't eat his meal too.

The fire started in the engine compartment of a Ford F150 Pickup Truck, consuming the dashboard and engine compartment, before spreading to the garage in front of the vehicle. We believed a wiring problem caused the fire, something that wasn't uncommon in that type of truck and the reason for factory recalls of that model later on.

While completing notes on the truck and apartment fires, we were dispatched to my old Alma Mater, W. F. Herman High School. There, a custodian showed us to the furnace room where a small refuse fire had been intentionally set. Entry to the room was via a rooftop hatch that wasn't alarmed like the remainder of the school.

Walking down the main hall brought back bad and good memories. I spent some time in the principal's office at the end of the hall and my picture once hung in the trophy display cases along the wall of fame. I was an all-star water polo player back in the day, having made the provincial all-star team and trained for the Olympics.

Before I cleared the school fire, the dispatcher asked if I could return to the apartment in Polonia Park where the owner had returned home. The man's statement left me with more questions than answers, and after some pointed questions and denials we came to an agreement. Someone had broken into his apartment to steal drugs, and then set the fire to cover up their crime.

Six

Project Plastic

Stolen and cloned credit and debit cards had become a thing, with groups coming from as far away as Toronto to hit ATMs in our city and raid peoples bank accounts. We also had reports of card skimmers and hidden cameras and even fake fronts on money dispensing machines, all aimed at stealing cash. The banking industry said they planned to address the issue with new 'chip' cards in an attempt to alleviate the problem.

In the meantime, fraudsters bilked millions from unsuspecting victims. I received a steady flow of information regarding Borja and Armand and how they were using their stolen credit cards for shopping sprees throughout the city. Goods purchased, such as plasma televisions and other electronic equipment, were sold at up to fifty cents on the dollar on the street.

The group of kids not yet old enough to drink legally were raking in loads of cash from what many called a *victimless crime*. 'It's only the bank's money', is what some said. But people were having their identities stolen along with sensitive credit information. In considering everything that was going on, and being someone who liked to think outside the box, I proposed 'Project Plastic' to my bosses on September 25th.

I gathered what intelligence information I could on all the players who'd been identified so far. This included reaching out to stores like Future Shop and Walmart and conferring with their Loss Prevention people to secure any video footage of fraudulent transactions. Surprisingly, the electronics store had no one specifically assigned to security.

Walmart staff proved invaluable. Using times and dates I provided, they were able to secure video evidence of suspects using stolen credit cards. We discovered they had employees at both stores who were in on the scam. They later confessed to getting a piece of the action for swiping the stolen cards without checking their validity.

I partnered with a very helpful Loss Prevention guy at the east side Walmart store, who took it upon himself to sort through miles of video tape to locate several occurrences where the compromised clerks completed transactions for my fraud suspects. I was pleasantly surprised when Drago Borja's mug showed up on tape. It was direct evidence he was involved in the frauds.

If an honest store clerk did their due diligence, they would find the card holder name and sometimes even the gender didn't match the person using the credit card. That's where crooked staff came into play. It was that same video evidence that allowed me to identify Armando and his girlfriend. Mohamad confirmed my suspicions and I was able to obtain a full name and address on the Romanian fraudster.

Double Team

On October 17th, Mohamad called with an early birthday present for me. Mine was the next day. He said Borja had just dumped a new load of data on Armando, who had skimmers and stolen cards and newly purchased electronics in his apartment. My CI added the two amigos were going out shopping at both Walmart stores after dinner. Each man had their own crew and were going out to buy televisions and iPods.

This was the kind of action I was hoping for but it wouldn't be easy coordinating surveillance on separate vehicles going in opposite directions to different stores. A couple of fraud detectives jumped at the chance to make some overtime and they volunteered to follow Armando, who lived in the apartment building across from police headquarters.

The Drug Squad had an afternoon shift working and they agreed to set up on Borja. Mobile surveillance on moving vehicles is difficult in itself. Plus, we had the additional challenge of following suspects on foot into the Walmarts to catch them in the act. Their Loss Prevention people stepped up and monitored their surveillance cameras, staying in touch with me by mobile phone.

All we had to do was wait for the suspects to go shopping. Mohamad called and gave me a heads-up, telling me when they were heading out. He was kept in the loop by Borja, who had promised him a new iPod. I wondered if I'd bit off more than I could chew when our radios came to life and everyone was on the move. The

Drug Squad used one channel and my guys another, so I juggled two radios and my cell phone while driving at the same time. There's a law against that sort of thing now.

It was a bit confusing at times but the plan worked and we pulled it off. Both surveillance teams followed their perspective targets to each Walmart, one in South and the other in East Windsor. Security took over and used video surveillance to follow targets when they entered the stores and called out progress to me on the phone. With that, I kept both police teams outside until the suspects returned to their cars.

Between the two vehicles, five men and one woman were arrested for fraud and possession of stolen property. Two iPods and a plasma television were in plain view but I gave orders to secure both vehicles until we obtained warrants to search them thoroughly. All fraudulent transactions made by the suspects were captured on video.

To get an early start on the anniversary of my birth and thank the Drug Squad guys for stepping up and helping with surveillance and the take down, I treated them to a round of drinks. Normally nine-to-fivers, the fraud guys went home early. The narcs were better partiers, but I was the last man standing.

Happy Birthday

After a short night with little sleep, I went into work early and got a head start on three separate search warrants: one for each vehicle and another for Armando's apartment. My co-workers executed the vehicle warrants and seized two iPods, a plasma television, and cloned credit cards. Myself and two other fraud detectives searched Armando's apartment.

Once inside the unit, I had to laugh. Standing in the living room and looking out the window, I had a clear view across the street and directly into our third-floor office at the cop shop. Not that Armando knew where our office was, or who any of us were prior to his arrest, but it was definitely a bit unnerving. We seized an MSR, PMR, a laptop and seventy-seven credit cards. When I interviewed the Romanian kid, he was more arrogant than Borja. He thought the whole thing was a big joke and refused to cooperate in any way.

In total, Walmart security came up with eighteen fraudulent occurrences capturing all my suspects on video. The real credit card holders were later compensated by their banking institutions but Walmart was defrauded of thousands of dollars in merchandise. The other crew members were interviewed and two confessed they were only along for the ride—to collect merchandise.

A few days later, after being released on bail once again, Drago Borja and his lawyer came to visit me. The mouthpiece said they were looking for leniency and perhaps a pre-arranged deal on the stack of accumulated criminal charges his client was facing. The

cocky punk tried to trade useless information I already had. When I told him what I needed to know, he balked. I left him with my best confident grin and said I'd see him later, in court.

Seven

What Goes Around

Mohamad stayed in touch and was ecstatic when I returned his $11,000 in U.S. currency we had seized when his house was raided. He said the timing was perfect for his planned honeymoon in the Bahamas. In all honesty, I didn't have much of a case on him to prove the funds were proceeds of crime. He had proven himself to be a valuable informant and continued giving me updates on the Western Union scam, even though he was working with the Secret Service.

On November 11th, two more out-of-towners were arrested at a bank on Ottawa Street with twenty-four cloned debit cards. It seemed there was no end to the easy money criminals made from the savings accounts of unsuspecting victims. At least I did my part and helped to shake up local fraud circles and put a serious dent in their business plan.

There wasn't a lot of humor in my job but every once in a while, I had a good laugh at someone else's misfortune. That was the case when I read the overnight arrest sheet on December 8th, that year. Drago Borja and his father were both arrested after a domestic dispute at the family residence. According to the police report, they

got into it with Mrs. Borja over their continuing criminal activities and she threw them out of the house.

Killing Trees

Two days later, on December 10th, 2006, I was officially assigned to the Arson Unit, a one-man position. I remained in the Financial Crimes office but switched desks and hats. The job change came with a vehicle at my disposal, the arson van. I still had fraud cases to handle and carried my two biggest ones with me, the Borja and PacMan files.

Project Plastic—Borja and company, had taken on a life of its own. When I wasn't on the road investigating arson or other fraud cases, I was in one of our project rooms sorting and filling banker's boxes filled with dozens of files and hundreds of reports. The multi-faceted investigation had spanned seven months, generating enough paperwork to claim a small forest. In my estimation, the accumulated frauds added up to about a half million dollars. Borja alone was charged with sixty-six separate counts of fraud and possession of stolen property.

In January, 2007, I delivered the cartload of file boxes to the prosecution office, only to receive them back a few days later. Not familiar with complex fraud investigations, the Assistant Crown Attorney assigned to the case blew a gasket when he saw the quagmire of paperwork he'd inherited and would have to sort through.

Normally, for investigators in major crimes, a secretary would be tasked with organizing huge case files and providing a 'crown brief' or summary for a better understanding of the case. It included indexes and witness lists, etc. I wasn't so lucky and after taking on the task myself, I shipped the boxes back to prosecutions.

Doctor Death

Over the next week, I attended three fires and earned the moniker, Dr. Death. It seemed the new arson investigator was on a roll, finding dead bodies at each scene. All were unique, adding to my experience. The first one appeared simple enough. At a well-known crack house in a seedy downtown neighborhood, I learned it was not a good idea to pass out with a hot crack pipe.

The cause of my second fatal fire proved to be more difficult. I concurred with the Fire Investigator that the fires were intentionally set inside a small apartment at an old multi-unit building, downtown. Finding two or more sources of origin is evidence of arson in itself since it is next to impossible for fires to start simultaneously in different areas. The apartment's sole occupant was found burned to death lying on a mattress on the bedroom floor.

If the deceased died in the bedroom our first challenge was to figure out who set the fires in the living room. Was the man asleep at the time or did he set the fires and then pass out? We had more questions than answers. The male victim was identified by documents found in a wallet on his person. The trouble was, and we didn't discover it until the next day, the deceased was not the man who resided in the apartment. The owner was out of town.

You would think people living in close quarters, like a small apartment building, would know most or at least some of the neighbors. Statements from those who resided there were as varied as the colors in a bag of M & M's. According to residents, the man was either a polite and quiet neighbor or a partier, with guests coming and going at all hours.

The true occupant of the apartment was not much help. He had no idea who the dead man was or how he got into his home. Investigation into the victim's background revealed a minor criminal record with theft and narcotics charges, and some suggestion of

mental illness. Since there was no sign of forced entry to the apartment, the mystery only grew.

Treated as a possible homicide, Major Case detectives took over but didn't uncover any more clues than we did. Since cause of death was smoke inhalation, one theory was the man wandered into the vacant apartment and committed suicide. A second theory was someone tried to kill the true occupant but got the wrong guy. The truth is the case remains unsolved, as with many arsons, which in my opinion are the most difficult crimes to prove.

My third fatal fire was a case of careless smoking. Simple enough to figure out but sad just the same. The man was a retired professor with a heavy chain-smoking habit. The trash can in his bedroom was half-full of cigarette butts and the source of the fire. It appeared the deceased was taking his clothes off and getting ready to retire for the night. We found him on the edge of the bed, with his pants down around his ankles.

Flames from the trash can had ignited the curtains and bed linen, soon engulfing the entire bedroom. The man had mobility issues and was unable to escape the raging inferno. The door was closed and the lack of oxygen caused to fire to flashover and burn out before it could enter the rest of the apartment.

I found humor helped to retain my sanity in such a gruesome situation. A young forensics specialist entered the bedroom while we were examining the body and she snapped images of the victim and damage in the room. When she asked what happened, I pointed to what was left of the man's penis and told her to take a photo because it was the cause of the fire.

Her facial expression was of horror and bewilderment. I continued, "You see how his pants are down and he was sitting on the edge of the bed?" She nodded. "Well, he was masturbating and caused a spark, setting himself on fire." The Fire Inspector laughed so hard he almost dropped his notebook in the burnt trash can. If I read the

specialist's face correctly, it said, "You're sick!" She turned and left the room.

Eight

Fraud Pays

I was on furlough the last two weeks of July that year and took my Harley for a ride down south through the Smokie Mountains, along the Blue Ridge Parkway and into the Carolinas. It was my means of soul-searching, trying to discover the meaning of life. I love ignoring interstate highways and exploring old roads, travelling the one-time backbone of America.

When I got back to work in August I had a voicemail from Drago Borja, who wanted property seized during his last arrest returned to him. I brought up the file on my computer. It showed the case was concluded, settled by a guilty plea and subsequent conviction on only one of the sixty-six fraud charges. Not believing my eyes, I read the court sentence again: one-year house arrest and another year on probation, with the condition he pay back Walmart $1,500 for the items he stole during the last arrest.

To prove I wasn't dreaming, I read everything over again. I blew a gasket. Borja addressed the court and went on record to tell the judge he was young, stupid, and it wouldn't happen again. I was beside myself and stormed into my boss's office. The verdict was news to him. Many cases are settled by way of guilty pleas in court

without consulting the officer in charge but I thought at least a courtesy phone call would have been nice.

Reaching out to the Crown Attorney's office was a waste of time. The prosecutor who had me index and re-summarize the massive file had sluffed off the case, giving it to an inexperienced subordinate who caved to the demands of a senior defense lawyer. He made the deal without consulting me or anyone else in Financial Crimes. Legally, the cocky computer kid was bound to stay home for a year, unsupervised, where he could easily carry on his fraud business. Moral of this story: Fraud pays.

I eventually solved the Pac Man cases and arrested a criminal I'd known for years. Johnny Eagle was an arsonist from way back; a man who was sexually aroused by fire at an early age. I chased him around for petty crimes when I was a patrol officer on the east side. Like many other long-term criminals who refused to grow up, Eagle became addicted to drugs and had to find money to supply his crack habit.

I have to admit his fraud scams were quite creative, leaving me with little information to go on in my pursuit to solve the cases. I'd accumulated at least a dozen of them, each a bit different, making my job more difficult. It all started with a phone call to someone he selected from the newspaper, and a promise to deliver an important package if they paid him for it. It was borderline extortion.

Eagle's first victim was a local businessman who received a call saying a sensitive and private conversation between him and another business owner was overheard and recorded. And if he wanted the tape, a cash ransom was required. The victim explained how he was in the middle of a business deal and the release of their private discussions could have a negative impact on the respective companies.

No one in the fraud office had ever heard of such a scam. The businessman paid the ransom. In return he received a package—a cassette tape. When the man played the tape, it contained nothing

but recorded rock and roll music. Although embarrassed, the respectable businessman called police in the hope of saving someone else from falling victim to a similar scam.

The reports kept coming in. Usually business-type people who were extorted by Eagle, saying they had to pay ransom to retrieve some sort of sensitive information. In another case, it was a family heirloom he promised to return, for a price. The owner had posted the loss in the media, gaining Eagle's attention.

I learned the same thing was happening in the county, just outside the city, where the Ontario Provincial Police had jurisdiction. I joined forces with a female constable to compare notes. I was single at the time and she was cute but probably young enough to be my daughter. We noted the ransom demand was always in the area of $300 - $350, in cash.

Those numbers wouldn't mean much to most but they did to me and I wasn't sure why at first. One common thread stood out in the police reports. A telephone number used to call some of the victims. We were lucky enough to obtain it from the first complainant's phone records. The number belonged to a pay phone on Ouellette Avenue, out front of a large apartment building that was run by the city.

My lucky streak continued when we visited one of my contacts who ran the city office in the building. We had collaborated before on unrelated matters, helping each other to keep the place drug free. When I explained what was going on with the phone out front, my friend immediately thought about one particular apartment in the building, saying she had reports of suspicious sorts coming and going at all hours.

Bingo! Frequent short-term visitors to the apartment were a telltale sign of drug trafficking, and that's when it clicked. The price of an 8-ball of cocaine sold in the range of $300 to $350. It was still a stretch to connect anyone in the apartment to the fraud scam but

we attended the apartment anyway. I knocked on the door, standing close to the peephole as to conceal my uniformed O.P.P. partner.

Someone inside the unit asked who it was and I said, "Johnny", a name picked at random so they might open the door. It worked.

A man swung it open and said, "Johnny, where've you been? We're all waiting." Without knowing exactly what it was, I knew we stumbled into the middle of something suspicious, probably a drug deal. The door was open wide enough I clearly saw four others in the living room. I recognized one of them as a crack-head.

My eyes darted around the room, taking in the other faces and drug paraphernalia in plain sight on the coffee table. My lucky streak continued but a drug bust wasn't on my list of priorities. I brushed past the man who answered the door and confronted the group in the living room. We took names and received denials of any wrongdoing from all present, except for the apartment owner who'd answered the door.

I questioned him outside his apartment in the hallway and explained how he might be able to continue living there if he cooperated. He wasn't prepared to seek residency elsewhere and told me they were waiting on a drug dealer named, Johnny, to deliver crack cocaine. I acted quickly and dropped a dime to the Drug Squad, requesting they send a couple officers over.

The OPP Constable and I set up surveillance in the stairwells at opposite ends of the hallway and waited on Johnny. His timing was perfect. He got off the elevator and I arrested him for possession of a narcotic. He had a baggie of crack in his pocket. The two drug cops stepped out of the elevator just in time to secure the evidence and handcuff the drug dealer.

We I returned to the apartment and delivered the bad news, that Johnny got busted and they wouldn't be getting high any time soon. In the spirit of continued cooperation, the apartment owner gave me a list of names of people who used the phone out front. When

Johnny Eagle's name popped out of his mouth, I knew that Johnny was the Pac Man.

It took some time to track him down but I eventually arrested him and offered a team sweater if he rolled over and became my informant. With the number of charges hanging over his head and the fear of trying to dry out in jail, Eagle joined the team. Our relationship was rocky at first but he eventually found the path to redemption and became a good CI who helped me nab other scammers.

With Johnny Eagle's past as an arsonist, he also helped me gain a better understanding of that crime, in relation to his own demons and what motivated other firebugs. I spoke to his wife on a few occasions, trying to keep him away from drugs. He struggled and fell off the wagon at least twice. His wife called me when he'd disappear for days at a time. Eventually, they moved out west for a fresh start.

Last Laugh

Every once-in-awhile cops get the last laugh or maybe satisfaction justice has been meted on the street, where criminals settle things their own way. Thus was the case in the matter of Drago Borja versus the Windsor Police.

I was a few years into retirement when I picked up a copy of the Windsor Star and caught up on the news. I was sipping my morning bottle of water, taking in current events before I flipped to the travel section in search of my next winter destination.

The headline read, "Windsor man twenty-five and his pit-bull shot dead in Edmonton." Shame on me—I smiled. Drago Borja had met his maker. Wondering if he died with that cocky grin on his face, I continued to read. He was found in the basement mechanical room of his apartment building with his dog, Deebo. The case was pending. My first thoughts were of Romanian mafia suspects.

According to the building manager, Borja had a computer business and worked from home. Then came the part I've heard way too many times over the years, after one of the dregs of society kicks the bucket. The manager said, "He was a good guy." I laughed out loud. Crime paid handsomely for the cocky computer whiz kid. Too bad he didn't live to spend it.

The End

Thirty Years Cold

One

Rocking and Rolling

A maroon colored 1972 Pontiac Grand Prix with chrome rims, sat in the parking lot near the tennis courts at W.F. Herman High School. It was the summer of seventy-seven and the sound of *Led Zeppelin's* 'Black Dog' blasted through the car's open windows. A young man with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing mirrored sunglasses, sat behind the wheel, his head bobbing to the music. Chas Warner loved rock and roll.

The day was crisp and sunny. Two seagulls fought over a piece of pizza crust, soaking in a puddle from the previous night's rain. A male teenager exited the cafeteria door at the back of the school, carrying a green and white gym bag. He had curly blonde hair and wore Levi jeans and a matching vest, over a Black Sabbath concert shirt. Walking directly to the Grand Prix, he lifted his chin to the driver.

Chas turned the music down a notch when blondie climbed into the passenger seat. To a passer-by, they were only two guys engaged in conversation and listening to music. Three minutes later, blondie slipped something into his gym bag, shook the driver's hand and got out of the car. Warner turned the music back up, fussed with his hair in the mirror, and then started the engine.

He drove a slow loop around the parking lot, then exited, turning north on Bernard Road. The car stopped for a second. The engine roared and the tires spun wildly. The ass end of the Grand Prix bounced up and down but remained stationary while Chas performed a brake-torque. Blue smoke engulfed the car and the smell of burnt rubber filled the air. The Pontiac lurched forward and took off like a bullet.

A small group of students were gathered on the grass, near the parking lot. Two young girls gawked, their mouths agape. The boys laughed out loud. One shouted words of encouragement. The muscle car was out of their sight before the smoke cleared.

Chas got out of the vehicle in the parking lot behind his apartment building at Seminole and Central. The tires were still smoking. Giddy, he admired the metallic paint job, how it sparkled in the sunlight. He stroked the left front fender on the way to the back door of his residence.

Instead of going to the elevator, he took the back stairs to the basement. He walked through the laundry room and into the storage area, where he had a bin. It was more of a cage—a fenced enclosure, with a locked gate. Using his key to open the padlock, he stepped inside the unit.

After rolling two snow tires out of the way, he reached to the back wall and grabbed a large green garbage bag. Two decoy ducks spilled onto the floor. He searched inside and removed a smaller white shopping bag. After replacing the decoys and rolling the tires back into place, Chas locked the gate and headed up to his apartment.

Upstairs, he selected *Deep Purple's Machine Head* from a shelf, and slipped it into the eight-track player of his stereo system. Cranking up the volume, he nodded approval of the opening bass guitar in 'Smoke on the Water'. He pulled a wad of cash from his pants pocket and tossed it on the kitchen table, beside the shopping bag and triple beam scale he'd lifted from the science lab at school.

Still wearing his shades and playing the air guitar, Chas admired his reflection in the window. The phone rang. Imitating a rock star, he strummed and strutted in sync to the music. He didn't bother to turn down the music when he grabbed the phone. He had to yell. "It's your dime..."

"It's payday. You got the cash?"

"Most of it, I was just counting..."

"What do ya mean most of it? That wasn't the deal."

"No problem, man...big party weekend...I got it covered."

"By Monday or you can sign over the pink slip for that hot rod."

The caller hung up. Chas dashed back to the stereo and turned it up louder to catch the guitar solo. He pushed the sunglasses up his nose and rocked on.

Two

Hunting Ducks

I heard the music as I drove up the block. When I pulled into Gerry's driveway, the house windows vibrated. Walking in unannounced, as usual, I saw Gerry standing in the middle of the living room with his back to the front door. *Jethro Tull's* 'Aqualung' was blaring so loud, he didn't hear me come up behind him.

The dog caught my movement and charged forward, warning his master of the intruder. Gerry turned and smiled. He said something but his words were lost in the music. He shouted at me, pointing to all four corners of the room where new speaker towers loomed. I shook my head, letting Gerry know I couldn't hear a word he was saying.

He was Gerald Baines to his mother, Crazy Gerry to those who knew him. He turned the music down a couple notches, but still had to shout.

"How do you like my new quadraphonic system, Norm? The album is specially recorded that way...pretty cool, eh?"

Having noted the volume control, I turned down the stereo another couple notches so he didn't have to shout back. "Yeah, sounds great. What's quadraphonic?"

Gerry grabbed a tiny joystick on the front of the stereo receiver, and moved it in a circle. I swiveled my head, following the music around the room from speaker to speaker. Nodded my approval. Gerry still shouted, as if he'd lost his hearing. "The album's recorded on four separate channels...like stereo times two, with front and back, and left and right."

I nodded again. "When did you get it?"

"I bought everything this morning; Bev doesn't know yet. Ain't it great?"

I grinned. Gerry waved me into the kitchen, where it wasn't much quieter. He opened the fridge. "I ain't got any beer, you want a pop?"

"No, I'm good. Where's Bev?"

"She's at her mom's. She's gonna flip when she finds out how much I spent. Hey, drive me to the store—we need beer."

We left through the front door, leaving it unlocked. As far as Gerry was concerned, Corky was all the security he needed. He fiddled with the radio's tuner as soon as he got in my mother's car, a 1969 Ford LTD. "We gotta get you a cassette player, nobody buys 8-tracks anymore."

"Maybe when I can afford my own car, after I start the new job."

Gerry settled on a station playing rock and roll. "Your days are numbered. I can't believe Norm Strom's gonna be a cop."

"Me either. No hot stereos, Gerry."

Crazy Gerry was the man—he knew where to get things or someone else who knew where to get things. Car stereos, tires, rims, motorcycle parts, dope.... whatever. He wasn't a bad guy; he worked full time at Ford's. He had some previous brushes with the law when he hung out with his biker friends, but he was never arrested for anything.

"Hey, Norm, before we hit the beer store, I need to stop at my old apartment building. Gotta pick something up."

"That place on Seminole at Central? Nothing hot...I can't afford any trouble, Gerry."

"Don't worry, just a few decoy ducks someone left in the basement."

I stopped for the light on at Pillette and Tecumseh Roads. Watching a Windsor Police cruiser go by, I couldn't help wondering what it'd be like as a cop. "What the hell do you need decoy ducks for?"

"One of the guys at work—he's going hunting and asked me if I knew anyone who had some he could borrow."

"Borrow, right."

"Really, Norm. If they're still there, they've probably got dinosaur shit on them."

I drove past the Hook and Ladder Club, on Seminole, then turned right on Central and pulled into the parking lot behind the apartment building.

"I'll only be a minute." Gerry laughed. "I wonder if my keys still work, I forgot to give them back."

I watched Gerry walk to the building—he was shorter and skinnier than me, wiry, and a black belt in karate. I saw him take apart three guys at one time, behind the Drop-In Tavern, after one of them broke a beer bottle over his head.

His long hair, goatee, and black t-shirts made him look like a badass biker, but he had a big heart. I wondered how Bev put up with his antics—like the time he built a complete Harley Davidson motorcycle in their spare bedroom.

Gerry came out of the apartment building carrying a green garbage bag. He opened the passenger door and threw it on the back seat. A duck poked its head out of the bag.

I checked the rear-view mirror. "I take it you found the decoys?"

"Yeah, looks like four or five in there...a fucking flock." He laughed at himself.

I smirked, then pulled out of the parking lot and headed for the beer store. After picking up a two-four, I dropped Gerry off at home.

"You coming in for one?"

"No, I'm going home for dinner."

Gerry got out of the car, threw the case of beer on his shoulder, and then grabbed the bag of decoys with his free hand. "See ya later copper."

I smiled and drove away.

Three

Extra Cheese

I walked in the back door and into the kitchen. My sister, Lynn, was tearing off the top of a box of Kraft Dinner. "I didn't know if you'd be home for supper, you want me to open another box?"

"Sounds good. I'm gonna hit the shower first."

"Okay, it'll probably be ready when you're done. Oh, before I forget, Gerry called for you."

Lynn was the eldest of my three sisters, and three years younger than me. I looked at the bathroom door. It was closed. "Who's in there?"

"Your little brother, he said he needed to take a dump to make room for supper."

"Nice. Hope he sprays when he's done."

Donny was the youngest of my two brothers. I was used to waiting for the only bathroom in the house, shared by my mother and five siblings. If it was an emergency and someone was in the shower, you'd knock and holler, "Coming in!" and then go about your business. It was either that or mess your pants.

That's the way it was during my childhood, when mom raised six kids all on her own. After my dad left, I became the man of the family. I was eleven at the time, my youngest sister was only one. We

lived in a small two-story house, with a barn-shaped roof. We took some ribbing from the other neighborhood kids for that.

Somehow, seven of us managed in the small home. It consisted of a utility/laundry room, kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom and three small bedrooms—three boys in one and three girls in another. Mom had her own.

"I was just *at* Gerry's. Did he say what he wants?"

"No. He said to come over right away."

Donny emerged from the bathroom.

I asked, "Is it safe in there?"

He laughed, and walked over to the stove to check on the mac and cheese. He spooned a couple noodles and popped them into his mouth.

Lynn snapped, "It's not done yet—I hope you burn your tongue."

He'd already swallowed. "Don't forget the extra cheese."

I showered, without interruption. Unless it was urgent, my siblings knew enough to stay out when big brother was in there. I'd been known to throw a bar of soap at them for stinking things up. A courtesy flush meant a scalding shower. Soaking under the hot water, I wondered how different policing would be from my current warehouse job. The money was comparable to start, but I'd eventually make a lot more.

All clean and shiny, I eyed my refection in the mirror. The Police Force told me I'd have to lose the long hair, but they approved of my six-foot-one build and athletic abilities. I swam five to six days a week, playing water polo for the City of Windsor team. I also trained with the provincial all-star team, destined for the Olympics someday. But for me, reality was working for a living. There was no such thing as professional water polo with highly paid athletes.

I wrapped a towel around my waist and went upstairs to the bedroom I shared with Brian, my next youngest brother. We kicked little Donny out, making him sleep on a cot in the hallway alcove.

His age put him between the two youngest girls, too immature to be in the same room with his teenaged brothers. It left me room to add more speakers to the stereo system and to build bar out of an old china cabinet.

After slipping into fresh jeans and my favourite *Rush* t-shirt, I went downstairs and scooped a big bowl of KD. I took my mac n' cheese to the phone table, sat on the stairs and called Gerry.

"Norm...what are you doing? Get your ass over here and hurry!"

"I had to shower, and now I'm filling my face. Why, what's up?"

"Just get over here as quick as you can—I've got a surprise for you."

Talking with a mouthful of noodles, I mumbled. "Later."

In the Weed

When I got back to Gerry's it sounded like there was a party going on in the kitchen. The music wasn't as loud as earlier, but there were voices and laughter. Corky attacked my crotch when I walked in the front door; something Gerry taught him. I smelled reefer before I got to the kitchen.

What I saw next made me freeze in my tracks. My mouth dropped open, but no words came out. I shuffled forward, as if walking on ice. Like I'd just entered *Cheers,* everyone shouted in sync, "Norm!"

My brother, Brian, Fritz and Gerry, sat around the table ogling a giant heap of marijuana like it was a stack of gold bars.

I broke from my trance. "What the fuck?"

Gerry had papers and was trying to roll a joint. He was exuberant. "Look what was in the bag with the decoys...three pounds of green!"

The only response I could manage was, "Holy shit."

Brian laughed. Fritz picked up a handful of weed and stuffed it in his mouth, as if he was about to eat it. I bent over and stuck my nose in it. I repeated, "Holy shit," and sat down at the table. Corky

ran around in circles, chasing his tail. He was probably high. Crazy Gerry liked to blow smoke in the dog's face.

He struggled with the papers; he never could roll a good joint. Fritz took over. I sat there, stunned. I completely forgot about my new career starting in a couple weeks. I took the pack of Vogue's from the table, and started gluing papers together. Brian passed me the joint Fritz had rolled.

I shook my head. "Not now, I'm busy." Patching together ten rolling papers, I formed them into a trough and packed it with weed. When I was done rolling, the joint was the size of a Cuban cigar. All eyes were on me when I placed it between my lips and lit up. They were mesmerized, as if Charlie's Angels had just walked into the room, naked.

We took turns smoking the big fatty. We laughed, and laughed, and laughed. I leaned back on my chair and fell over backwards, up against the wall. I couldn't stop laughing and couldn't get up. The other guys laughed even harder.

Gerry's wife, Bev, walked into the kitchen. All eyes diverted to her and the laughing stopped for a second. Then we all burst into laughter again. Bev shook her head, turned around and headed for the bedroom.

A few days later, while I was visiting my girlfriend, Gerry called. Nora handed me the phone. "It's Crazy Gerry...he just asked if I was naked."

I took the phone.

"Were you balls deep?"

Nora overheard the question. She smiled, got up from the couch and put her robe on. I cleared my throat. "Wouldn't you like to know? What's up?"

"See if you can get a note from your squeeze to go to Niagara Falls."

"Why? What are you talking about?"

"Just you and me—my treat."

"I don't need a note...what do you mean your treat?"

"Well, I've...ahem, come into some money since I... you know...found those decoys."

"I get the picture. Why don't you take Bev with you?"

"Nah, I just bought her a new dryer. She's happy. I thought we could go. It would be your last hurrah, before you become a narc."

"I dunno. When were you thinking?"

"Tomorrow. We're both off this weekend and you've only got a couple weeks left to party your brains out."

"Nora's making me something to eat, I'll stop by later and we can talk about it."

"Bring her by, I love looking at those big titties." Gerry laughed out loud.

Road Trip

Early the next day, I climbed on the back of Gerry's 750cc Honda, and we headed up #3 highway to Niagara Falls. The trip was uneventful, but long. For dinner, Gerry insisted we find the best steak in town. He took me to the revolving restaurant at the top of the *Skylon Tower*. Without reservations and dressed in Levi jeans and jackets, we asked the maître d for a seat by the windows. We wanted the best view in town. Dressed in a tuxedo, the man looked us up and down, frowned and said, "Follow me."

After being seated, a waitress promptly asked what we'd like to drink. Gerry ordered us each a fancy cocktail, served in a tower-shaped souvenir glass. It was the first time I ate filet mignon, and was a little disappointed at how small it was. Gerry had the waiter add lobsters.

During dinner, I placed my drink on the edge of the table, near the window. When I reached for another sip, the drink was gone.

The waitress noticed my distress and re-appeared with my drink in hand. "It happens all the time." She pointed to the ledge near the windows and I noticed it was stationary and we were moving.

The young woman smiled. "The restaurant revolves so everyone can have a view of the falls. People lose their drinks, purses...whatever."

I feigned a chuckle and blushed. Gerry laughed and ordered two more drinks. The view of the American and Canadian falls was amazing. I could see for miles in every direction. After dinner, Gerry wanted to smoke a joint. "C'mon, Norm, let's get high in the sky." We went outside to burn one.

On the observation deck, the tower's height reminded me of my one-time fear. I was afraid of heights when younger, but found a solution to my problem by parachuting out of an airplane on four separate occasions.

Staying in town for the night was not in Gerry's plan. High as ten hippies, we mounted up and headed back down the highway. Darkness fell, and soon after, fog rolled in. I looked over Gerry's shoulder, but couldn't see anything ahead of us. We motored on.

Suddenly, for no reason, Gerry hit the brakes. "Whoa! Did you see that guy, Norm?"

"I can't see shit. What guy?"

"A guy and his dog...I think I hit them."

"You're high—maybe we should get the fuck off the road. You can't see anything in this fog."

Gerry slowed to a snail's pace, staring straight ahead into the grey nothingness. Out of nowhere, a neon sign appeared along the road. The dingy little place resembled the *Bates Motel*. We pulled in and Gerry paid for a room. It was a dump, something built fifty years earlier and never renovated.

There was no restaurant on site and we both had the munchies. I went in search of food while Gerry called home to tell Bev we

weren't going to make it back. I found pop and chocolate bars in a vending machine. When I returned to the room, Gerry was on the phone with his wife. She was at my house, visiting my mother.

"They don't believe us...think we're shacked up with a couple broads. If only they could see this shit hole." He searched his pockets for the rolling papers. "I need a joint. Shit! I lost the papers. They must've blown out of my pocket on the highway."

I pursed my lips in thought, went into the bathroom and returned with a roll of toilet paper. Gerry took in the room. The walls were covered with imitation wood paneling, and two black velvet matadors hung on the wall above the bed. A brown path on the beige shag rug showed the way from the bed to the door and bathroom; an attached outhouse with a shower.

"Norm, what the fuck are you doing with the toilet paper?"

"Want some of my chocolate bar?" I handed Gerry a piece. "Do you still have your lighter?"

He handed it to me. I took the foil wrap from the candy bar and burned off the wax paper lining. While it cooled in the ashtray, I removed all the toilet paper from the roll. "Gimme your pocket knife."

Gerry sat with the bag of weed in his lap, his face scrunched up, trying to figure out what I was doing.

I used the knife to cut a hole about the size of a nickel into one end of the cardboard tube. Then I wrapped the foil over the hole and tucked it in with my finger, forming a bowl.

"I get it...aren't you fucking crafty." Gerry grinned.

Gently, I poked seven or eight tiny holes in the bottom of the foil bowl. "Put some weed in there."

Gerry obliged. I put one end of the pipe up to my mouth and covered the other with the palm of my other hand. "Light me."

After a few puffs, we were both high as a weather balloon. We fell asleep watching an undiscernible picture on the shitty little TV in our even shittier room.

Four

Thirty Years Later...

Henry Davidson walked through the door of Financial Crimes, his hulking frame filling the opening. He acknowledged those who had arrived at the office before him. "Morning Norm, Pops, Boss."

"Sorry I'm late, boss, I was in Major Crimes. They want me to look at a cold case."

Staff Sergeant Colby answered. "What? Like you don't have enough fraud cases to work on? Maybe *you* can fill me in since Inspector Peckerhead is obviously too fucking busy to tell me why he's seconding one of my investigators."

Overhearing the conversation, I glanced in their direction for a second then returned my attention to the computer screen. The work day hadn't officially started and I was checking on my investments. Pops looked over my shoulder on his way to the photocopier.

"Got enough to retire on yet?"

"Damn close. Would be on easy street if the ex-wife didn't take half."

"How many days left, Norm?"

I turned to the calendar. "Two hundred and fifteen, including today."

Detective Davidson left the boss' office about ten minutes later, winked at me. I asked Harley—everyone called him that—" What's up?"

He rolled his eyes in the direction of Colby's office. "I'll bring you up to speed over breakfast."

"You're buying, it sounds like you're gonna be making some overtime."

Harley scooped up his notebook and headed for the door. "I'll see you in a bit, I've gotta go down to the vault and dig up some old reports."

He returned about an hour later, carrying a box full of files. "Just in time, my stomach's growling so loud, someone passing by the office stopped to ask if we were harboring a caged animal."

"Okay, let's go now. This case is thirty years old; it can wait a little while longer."

"That would explain the dust on the box. Wipe your pants off before we leave, it looks like you were on your knees in front of the Inspector."

Harley and I walked two blocks to *Elias Deli*. It's where many of us from police headquarters went for breakfast or lunch. We walked in the back door and waved at the owner, who was lying on the couch in his office. He waved back and said, "Hi guys." Louie had been serving breakfast in Windsor forever. He knew half the police force and fire department, as well as staff from the *Windsor Star*.

We sat at one of the cop tables. Everyone had their own favorite places to sit. The waitress was already in route with a coffee and diet coke. "Morning guys...the usual?"

We nodded and I asked, "Jules, can I get corned beef hash, instead of the home fries?"

"Whatever I can do to make your day, Detective." She flashed a big smile.

I always liked Jules and knew her from my days working off-duty at local bars. She was a hottie in her day. Married at the time, I admired her from a distance. Being loyal and happily married was lost on many of my coworkers. I watched her walk away.

Harley picked up his coffee, blew on it before taking a sip. I turned my attention to him. He took another sip and put the mug down.

"Okay...this is between us. The brass wants to keep a lid on it until we know exactly what we've got."

"Sure, who am I gonna tell...my cat?"

"Do you remember Karl Warner?"

"Yeah, Deputy Chief...way back when."

"We think we found his son."

My mind drifted back to the day Warner hired me. I stood in a line with six other fresh-faced applicants, all dressed in suits. I wore work boots, jeans, and a t-shirt. Making introductions to the Board of Commissioners, the Deputy explained how I used my job's lunch hour to attend the interview.

"You mean Chas? I didn't know he was missing. Went to high school with him. He was the biggest weed dealer at Herman. I don't think he got on well with dad."

"You're right about that. Warner threw him out of the house and they never spoke after that. His mother reported him missing some time later. They had assumed Chester...or Chas as you call him...moved out west during the oil boom in the early eighties."

"He used to have a great muscle car...a maroon Grand Prix."

"Anyway, a contractor discovered human remains while tearing down a grade school in the Deputy's old neighbourhood."

"And you think it's Chas?"

"It's not confirmed yet, but there's a good possibility. We won't hear back from the Center of Forensic Sciences for a few days."

"No shit...first I've heard of any of it."

Jules appeared and set our meals in front of us. She found my eyes and smiled again. The conversation paused until she was out of earshot.

Harley spoke up. "You two got some history? Never mind, I don't wanna know. They found the body...or what's left of it, two days ago. Major Crimes has kept it quiet so far. They want a positive ID before we tell the family. Old man Warner is not doing well and is on his way out...cancer. His wife died years ago."

"Chas had a sister, Sally; she used to be a Meter Maid. She worked for the city back when I was in uniform." I shoveled a fork load of hash into my mouth.

Davidson nodded. "Hmm, I didn't hear about that or read it anywhere."

"Doesn't surprise me, daddy wasn't proud of her either. I'm pretty sure she's a lesbian...not that it means anything. Why do they want you to work the case?"

Harley aimed a piece of toast at the opening below his nose. "Sounds like you know more than I do. Maybe you..."

"Nope. My head ain't big enough to work in Major Crimes."

"I hear you. Years ago, before he retired, Dexter Lewis looked into the missing person's case. He trained me when I started in Ident. They seem to think my forensic experience will help the investigation. I'm partnered with Jenkins but he's in the middle of a home invasion trial. Personally, I don't think he could investigate his way out of a corn maze."

I laughed out loud, almost spewing my pop. "Be nice, he's going places...could be your boss someday."

"Anyway, I've got my work cut out for me. That file box I brought into the office is all Lewis had. I gotta go through stuff put on paper during the dark ages...before we got computers when they used carbon paper and typewriters. Looks like I'm gonna be living in the vault for a while."

"Better you than me, buddy. Maybe you're going places too...starting with the basement."

Jules stopped by the table and asked if everything was good with our meals. With mouths full we nodded, and watched her walk away. Harley lifted his chin to me. "You did her, didn't you?"

"Finish your breakfast big guy—it's getting cold."

Five

Confronted

It was almost quitting time when Henry Davidson shuffled into the office, carrying two banker's boxes and a bundle of loose files stacked on top, his chin holding the pile. The boss shouted from his office. "I hope you're not bringing all that crap in here!"

"Don't worry; I'm setting up in the project room across the hall. Can I have the key, please?"

I eyed Harley. I'd never seen him so disheveled. His tie off, sleeves rolled up, and wearing enough wrinkles to look like he'd slept in his suit. His thinning brown hair was flat and drenched with sweat.

"Sleeping in the vault, buddy?"

Having put the boxes on his desk, Harley straightened up and caressed his lower back with the palms of his hands. "Might as well move in. I spent most of this last week in there. You wouldn't believe the shit they keep around here. I saw reports that looked like they were written in fountain pen."

"Sounds like you need a drink. It's Hook night...I'm buying the first round."

Harley glanced up at the clock and paused in thought. "Sure, I need to talk to you anyway."

"I've been told I'm a good listener. I'll be heading out shortly."

His lips flattened and he peered through squinty eyes, as though his thoughts were elsewhere. Davidson replied. "...yeah, sure, I'll see you there."

I was on my third beer by the time Harley joined me at the Hook & Ladder Club. "Where are the other guys?"

"It's a bit early for them, yet."

"Good. We need to talk."

Tommy put Harley's rum & coke in front of him. He picked up my near-empty bottle and raised his brow. "Thirsty, Norm?"

"Yeah. That one tasted like more."

The bartender guffawed and fetched me another beer. Harley's face didn't crack the slightest. He swallowed half his drink in one gulp. I eyeballed him. "What's up, brother? You look like you just found out Savannah's been cheating on you."

"It's the cold case. I've been doing some digging..."

"I thought the body was already dug up?"

Harley remained stone-faced. "Tell me again, how you knew Chester Warner?"

"What? High school—we weren't friends or anything, we had a few classes together. Gym, architectural drafting maybe..."

"...and the part about him dealing drugs?"

I swallowed a gulp of beer, and turned on my stool to face Harley.

"I heard he was the guy to see for weed, I knew guys who bought shit from him."

"And you?"

I paused. "No. I had other connections."

"Like Gerald Baines?"

"Wow, there's a blast from my past. Not that it matters much now, but yeah, I used to buy stuff from Gerry back in the day, in my previous life. You really *have* been digging. So, what about Gerry?"

Harley downed the remainder of his drink. He held it up for Tommy to see. "Did you know Gerry lived in the same building as

Warner—on the corner, not five hundred feet from here? And that he's connected to bikers?"

"Yes and no. Gerry lived in a house on Arthur Road when I hung out with him. He owned a bike, but so do you and I. He knew bikers but so do you and I. He never wore their colors and was never arrested, as far as I know." I flashed back to the summer of seventy-seven, when I drove Gerry to get the decoys. *Holy shit! Was that Chas Warner's weed?*

I pushed myself back a few inches on the barstool. "Are you saying you think Gerry had something to do with Warner's murder? I'm assuming it's a murder...I've never heard of anyone committing suicide and burying themselves in a shallow grave."

"I'm not saying that at all, Norm. I just thought you might want to fill me in before I track down your old buddy and he tells me something that's going to bite you in the ass."

My stare matched Harley's. I felt a knot in my stomach. A raspy voice fell from my lips. "So, buddy, you actually think I know or might have..."

"No. God no, Norm. I don't think that at all. Look, the brass is all over me about this case because of the dying Deputy. Peckerhead wanted to sit you down in an interview room but I told him I would handle it. I can only hope your past doesn't catch up with the both of us."

I waved Tommy over for another round. "Okay. Here's the straight dope—pun intended. Back in the summer of seventy-seven, before I was on the job, I drove Gerry to that apartment building. He said he lived there, before I knew him. I didn't know Warner also resided there."

"Anyway, Gerry went there to get decoy ducks, for a guy at work. He came out of the building with what I thought was them, in a green garbage bag, and I drove him home. He called me later and said there was three pounds of weed in the bag. Yes, I smoked the

shit back then, and I know Gerry sold some of it. I gave that life up before I got hired."

"Did Gerry know Warner?"

"Honestly, I have no idea. He knew lots of people. How the hell did you ever connect me with Gerry?"

"You'd be surprised what's in that vault, Norm. Remember the old P.I. cards?"

"Yeah, so?"

"One of the traffic guys put you and Gerry at Street Cycle, where the Lobos MC hung out. Aside from his bike gang customers, the owner did time for assaulting a cop."

I thought about it for a moment. "That makes sense now. One of the bike cops I rode with in the Blue Knights pulled me aside one day...a hundred years ago. He told me I should decide whose side I was on. I didn't get it at the time. I knew Gerry and the owner of Street Cycle were friends and we took our bikes there for repairs. I was naïve about bikers and what the job was all about back then."

"You never know who's watching. You were listed as a passenger in Gerry's car too, when he got into an accident."

"Holy shit, I forgot about that...my KFC went flying all over the back seat."

"What?"

"Never mind, I'm hungry. Wanna get something to eat?"

Harley finished the drink he was working on, and glanced at the clock. "No, Savannah's expecting me home for dinner tonight. Are you eating here?"

"Yeah, I'll wait for the other guys—they should be here any time. So, are we cool?"

Harley offered a flat smile. "Yeah, buddy, we're cool."

Six

C.S.I.

After consuming two large coffees and two chocolate chip cookies, and driving four hours to the Centre of Forensic Sciences in Toronto, Henry Davidson was wired. He'd been to the lab before, when he worked in the Identification Branch. Although the Windsor Police Service had its own forensics lab, it was basic and not equipped for specialties like pathology or anthropology.

Upon checking in at the front desk at CFS, he was told the remains were being held in the morgue at the coroner's building next door. Harley met with two specialists in a small office, overlooking the autopsy lab. The forensic scientists introduced themselves as Doctors Zaidan, pathologist, and Schubert, anthropologist. In the lab, a full set of human bones lay on a stainless-steel table, under bright lights. The Windsor detective had examined plenty of bodies during his career, but never one that had been buried for thirty years.

Donning surgical gowns and gloves, the three men gathered around the unearthed bones. Zaidan started the conversation. "We did some preliminary tests over the last few days, but we want to show our findings to you personally, Detective."

Schubert spoke directly to Harley. "We have various techniques available to determine when the body was discarded and buried, if the site was left intact."

"I'm not sure that's necessary at this point, Doctor. Our investigation revealed concrete aggregate had adhered to the remaining clothing fragments. We can try to find the date when the cement slab was poured, it wasn't original to the building. I'm more interested in damage to the skeletal remains, than decomposition...things that confirm identity and might assist in cause of death."

Zaidan walked around the table and positioned himself near the left arm. "I think we can help you in both those areas, Detective. Let me start from the beginning, gender and age. The remains are of a male, whose age corresponds with your missing victim at the time of his burial. I can't give you a time of death but can show you something in relation to cause."

The anthropologist pointed towards the radius bone. "Do you see the spiral fracture, there?"

"Was that fracture caused at the time of death?"

"Yes, and do you see the marks slightly above the break? Those show remodeling and are from a previous fracture healed years before. The injury matches medical records that you supplied."

"So, the bone was weak in that area, perhaps from the previous break, and was fractured again around the time of death."

"Yes, Detective, my opinion is the spiral fracture was pre-mortem. Then we have the head wounds..."

"Wounds? I only saw damage to the frontal lobe."

Dr. Zaidan adjusted the overhead lamp to illuminate the entire skull. "Yes, this fracture or indentation is specific to an object striking the crest of the frontal lobe. I've photographed and enlarged the image...I'll show you later, in my office." He rotated the skull, exposing the back.

"Do you see this fracture on the occipital lobe, just below the parietal?"

"I do now."

"In my opinion, an injury to the skull such as this could have been caused by the head coming in contact with something hard and flat, like a solid wall, or possibly a floor. If I was able to speculate...which we do not do here, I'd say the victim was struck in the forehead and fell backwards, striking the back of his head."

The detective stood in thought, scratching his chin. "So, Doctor, I don't suppose you can tell me if the arm was fractured before or after the head?"

"No, sir, I cannot."

Harley glanced up toward the Doctor's office. Schubert was already in there; he hadn't heard him leave the examination room. "Can I see the dental records I brought you, for comparison?"

"Absolutely. Let's join my colleague."

Schubert addressed the detective when he entered the office. "Will you require anything further from me? I could help with any soil samples you might have taken...for decomposition..."

"No, thanks Doctor. I appreciate your expertise, but I don't think I'll require any further input from you at this time." He left the office.

Zaidan pinned up the dental x-rays Harley brought; alongside the ones he took of the remains. They stood side by side, examining the images.

The doctor pointed. "If you look at the repairs to the back molars, you can see they match. There's been some work done after these x-rays—the ones you brought."

"Makes sense. The family disowned the victim. He could have had the work done by a different dentist. These dental records, and the images identifying the previous fracture to the left arm, are enough to eliminate any doubt about the victim's identity."

Harley sighed.

"Tough case, Detective?"

"This one's kind of like one of our own...a retired deputy chief's son."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Please pass on my condolences."

"He's on his deathbed. I know he wants closure, but I'm not sure how he'll take the news. He's demanded all the details, no matter how painful."

The doctor shook Harley's hand. "He's a stronger man than I. You take care, Detective."

He activated the cruise control, and settled in for the long ride back down the 401, to Windsor. A blinding sun filled the azure sky. Harley didn't look forward to it burning into his retinas all the way home. He played different scenarios in his head, trying to picture Warner taking a blow to his forehead, falling backwards, and cracking his skull on the pavement.

He saw it happen before, outside a downtown bar at closing time. A single punch and one man died. The other went to jail for manslaughter. *Was it something that simple? How did the spiral fracture on his left arm fit in? Did the attacker try to catch him? Questions...lots of questions, and speculation.* It wasn't enough, he needed proof.

Staring down the highway, Harley planned his next steps. He needed to track down a few people, if they were still alive. *Thirty years...I've got my work cut out for me.*

Seven

The Manager

After briefing Inspector Graves in Major Crimes, the one we all called Peckerhead, Harley checked his phone messages and email. He noticed a jacket draped over the back of my chair, but I wasn't sitting in it. Pops called out from his desk. "He's at Aldo's bakery...they had an explosion. Wasn't he training you for the arson job ?"

"He was, now I'm working for Major Crimes."

"Huh?"

"A cold case, are you going anywhere today? I'm taking the Camry and will be on the road most of the afternoon, tracking down witnesses."

"No, I'm deskbound...prepping a counterfeit case for court."

Pops was eating a bagel and Harley had to laugh. The man chewed every bite of food something like twenty-four times. He was an intelligent guy, in the absent-minded professor kind of way. His tall and lanky frame gave him the appearance he was moving in slow motion. Pops did everything slow, thus the nickname.

Three of Harley's messages were from the Peckerhead, before he briefed him on the trip to the CFS. He deleted them all. Picking up his pen, he replayed another message, paying close attention to the caller. In a thick accent, the man identified himself as Giovanni

Rossi, the former manager and caretaker of the apartment building on Seminole at Central.

The detective wrote down the man's name and number. He'd left his business card with the current management of the building, a nephew of Rossi. Knowing a phone conversation would be difficult with the old man and that interviews were always better when conducted in person, Harley planned to start where it all began. At the victim's apartment.

Rossi lived in a nursing home, downtown. It wasn't the nicest one in the city. The Detective smelled urine as soon as he walked in the door. The place was unlocked and no one was at the main desk. Harley wasn't surprised. He attended the same home in his uniform days, for tenants who escaped or went missing.

Walking along the main hallway, he peeked into doorways. A startled nurse called out to him. "Can I help you, sir?"

"Yes, ma'am, I'm looking for Mr. Rossi."

She was changing an old woman's diaper and didn't look up to respond. "Room thirteen, if he's not gone to lunch yet."

Harley said thanks, but had already turned away to avoid the pungent aroma that attacked him at the door. Walking into room thirteen, he almost tripped over an old man sitting in a wheelchair, just inside the door. The man shouted, "It's about time, the soup's gonna be cold again!"

Caught by surprise, Harley replied, "Excuse me?"

"Let's go ya big oaf, I cań't push this thing myself."

Rossi's word and accent were thick, but he made himself understood. Harley figured it was easier to go along. "Are you Giovanni Rossi?"

"It's my room, who the hell else would I be?"

"Where would you like to go, Mr. Rossi?"

"Lunch, ya big dummy...where do you think? I gotta get there before Fat Frank steals all the crusty rolls. He hides them under his shirt, thinks I'm stupid. If I could get out of this thing..."

The detective stepped behind Rossi's chair. "Okay, but you'll have to show me the way, I'm new here."

"Just follow the stench...smells like cabbage soup today. I'll be farting all night. Can you hurry it up? I wanna have a full stomach when I croak. I gotta get my money's worth from this dump."

Rossi shouted directions and verbally abused the detective all the way to the cafeteria. Harley helped him get his food, and grabbed an extra roll for the cranky old man. After wheeling him to a table, he watched him eat. Rossi looked frail in the chair, but was big-boned, and probably well-built in his younger years.

He was a proud man, he tucked his napkin into the neck of his shirt and signed the cross, before eating. His robe was soiled but it appeared he'd tried to wash the stains out himself. The old man eyeballed Harley. "You don't have to stay here and watch me eat."

"It's okay, Mr. Rossi. I'm Detective Davidson from the Windsor Police, you left me a phone message."

The old man stared for another second, and then clued in. "Why didn't you say so in the first place? You said you worked here...I thought you were just another useless orderly. I got to admit, you're better dressed and seem smarter than most. "

"You were hungry so I thought I'd get you down here before Fat Frank. Is he here?"

"Don't see him...maybe he died. They drop like flies around here."

"Can we talk about the apartment building you managed on Seminole and Central?"

"Sure, I used to run the place. My nephew said you're looking into that Warner boy. Damnedest thing."

"How so?"

"Just left one day...cleaned out the whole apartment and left. Had to be during the night. I wouldn't have known if the neighbor below hadn't complained about water dripping through the ceiling."

"Is that normal...for tenants to leave like that?"

Rossi used his napkin to wipe the corners of his mouth. He brushed crumbs off his robe and pushed his Jell-O aside. "Not normal, but you wouldn't believe the crap I put up with there. He left in the middle of the month...I still had his cheque for the last month's rent—his deposit."

"Do you remember when you saw him last, before he abandoned the apartment"

"Hard not to."

Harley scribbled in his notebook as the old man spoke. "Why is that?"

"Neighbor across the hall complained about the noise, the kid had a fight with his old man."

"How do you know that?"

"My job...I had to go up and tell him to keep it down...heard them through the door, screaming at each other. The kid had a bloody nose when he answered. Older guy said he was his father and a cop, not to worry about it. Why you asking after all these years, is he still missing?"

"He's dead, sir. Did Warner have problems with anyone else?"

"Dead you say. That's a shame. He didn't get many visitors but there was one guy I didn't like the looks of...wore one of those black vests from a motorcycle gang. I'd see him about once a week. From my apartment I could see everyone who came and went from the building. Lots of riffraff around that neighbourhood...especially after the city built those projects down the street."

Rossi gazed out the window, scratched the underside of his chin. Before Harley could ask another question, he continued.

"There was that other guy, former tenant. I saw him leaving the laundry room with a bag over his shoulder. Thought maybe he'd snuck in to wash his clothes for free but the door to the storage room was left open. When I checked there was still stuff in the Warner boy's bin, but the lock was gone. I thought it was strange how he emptied the apartment and left the bin, but it was mostly junk."

"I know it was a long time ago, but do you remember the other tenant's name?"

"My body's no good for nothing anymore, but I can still name the kids I went to grade school with. Crazy bastard—Harry, Larry something...worked at the Ford plant down the street."

"Gerry?"

"Crazy Gerry. That's what my wife used to call him. She caught him climbing up to his balcony one night after he locked himself out. The idiot lived on the third floor!"

Harley paused in thought, his eyes on the green Jell-O. "Aren't you going to eat your dessert?"

"I hate the stuff but I save it for my great granddaughter, she loves it."

"You've been a big help, Mr. Rossi."

Harley wheeled him back to his room and thanked him again, for his time. Walking through the parking lot on the way to his car, he thought about the earlier conversation with Norm Strom. It was time to track down his old friend, Crazy Gerry.

Eight

Exploding Bread

Harley must have seen me in the arson van chatting with the Ontario Fire Marshall, he walked up to my window. I turned to see it was him blocking the sunlight that'd been beaming in. "Hey, brother. Henry Davidson...this is OFM Larry Webster. You two will be working together some day."

He reached through the open window to shake Larry's hand.

"Harley, please. Everyone calls me Harley."

Larry was much smaller than the two defensive tackle-sized detectives, grey-haired and stocky. Retired from the Ontario Provincial Police, he'd joined the OFM as a second career. "You prefer it over Henry?"

"I'd rather be compared to a great motorcycle than a nutty chocolate bar. I heard this was an explosion and thought I'd be nosy, maybe learn something."

I asked, "Did you solve the Warner case yet?"

"I'll fill you in later...I'll be questioning someone you know. What's the verdict, Larry? Doesn't look like much of a fire."

"It looks like a gas explosion. There was a flashover in the back of the bakery but the suppression system took care of it. We're waiting for the gas expert from TSA to arrive." He pointed. "If you look at

the side wall, you can see where it's bowed out from the explosion. Good thing it was well-built and re-enforced, otherwise the house next door would have been bombed by flying concrete blocks."

I saw a firefighter walking towards the van. "To make this a bit more interesting, the mayor stopped by to see me. Says his cousin owns the bakery. Wants me to keep him in the loop, said he heard it was arson."

"Is it?"

"Looks that way...unless they were using gasoline to make bread rise. I've been told the business wasn't doing well. Go figure."

The Fire Captain popped his head in the passenger window. "Can I see you gentlemen at the back of the building?"

Harley opened my door and stepped back to allow me out of the van. "I thought *my* case was political. Think you'll be done work on time?

"It doesn't look like it, brother. I'll touch base with you in the morning...maybe for breakfast?"

"Sounds good. Nice to meet you, Larry. Don't work too hard, Norm."

I shrugged and followed the Fire Captain.

Tracking Witnesses

It was too late in the day to start anything else so Harley headed back to the office to confirm addresses for Gerald Baines and Sally Warner. He thought she might still work for the city and made a mental note to call Traffic Engineering, since parking enforcement fell under their umbrella. His cell phone rang, it was the Peckerhead.

"The chief is all over me for an update, Davidson, I need you to come in and see me right away."

"I'm on the way in now, Inspector, I'll be there in about ten minutes."

In the Major Crimes office, Conrad Jenkins was perched on a chair in front of Graves' desk. The Inspector nodded. "Davidson, we were just talking about you. Jenkins would love to help you with the Warner case, but he's up to his ass in alligators with his jury trial. And the rest of my crew is working that double stabbing outside the *Crazy Horse Saloon*."

Harley wasn't surprised by any of it. He knew the Inspector would take credit for everything he did, unless something went wrong. And he'd heard through the grapevine that Jenkins didn't want anything to do with the Warner case. The investigation would have taken him into the street but he preferred to handle things from the safety of his office. They called him the eternal flame because he never went out.

"I don't have much to tell you, Inspector. I interviewed the old manager from Warner's apartment building, who confirmed how

Chester Warner mysteriously disappeared. He gave me a lead on a former tenant who I already knew about. I'm planning on interviewing him tomorrow. He mentioned that his father..."

The Inspector's phone rang and he picked it up. "Okay, okay—I'm in the middle of...just a second..." He waved the two detectives out of his office and took the call. "Yes, Chief."

At breakfast, the next morning, Harley told me he wanted to interview Crazy Gerry. I shrugged. "Don't let me stop you. Personally, I don't think he's going to help your case, but what do I know."

"I was hoping you'd come with me...for the interview."

With a full strip of bacon in my mouth, I shook my head and continued chewing. Harley waited for a verbal response.

"No. Not only would it be weird, but it would put Gerry on the spot. I think you'd be able to get a better read on him without me there, my presence could influence his answers and body language."

Harley took his signature two sips of coffee. Jules walked by the table and winked at me. Harley moved his eyes from her to me. "No doubt in my mind...you did her."

I didn't answer and chased the last piece of egg around the plate with my fork. Harley spoke. "I couldn't get any wheels today; everything was signed out. Maybe we can double up...will you at least do the sister's interview with me?"

"Sure, I can do that, but I have to visit the precinct to log some evidence from yesterday's explosion. Since it's on the east side, why don't you drop me off there, do Gerry's interview, then pick me up and we can do the sister."

"I thought she didn't like men?"

"Funny. You know what I mean, you want my toast? I'm doing the low carb thing."

Harley shook his head and pushed his empty plate aside. He wrapped both hands around his coffee mug. "Did you hear back from the Fire Marshal?"

"No, but he's still in town...maybe we can hook up with him later in the afternoon. And since I'm chauffeuring you around all day, you're paying for breakfast."

"Maybe Jules will give you a freebee..."

I glanced in her direction, grinned.

Harley helped me carry the bags and boxes of evidence into Station #2, on Jefferson Avenue. I handed over the van keys. "Good luck with Gerry...tell him I said Hey."

"We'll see how the interview goes first. I'll talk to you when I get back."

"Cool. If I'm not in the main office, I'll be on the couch in the lunchroom."

Crazy Gerry

Retired from Ford, Gerald Baines told the detective on the phone he'd be home in the morning but he had to go to his part-time truck driving job that afternoon. Harley produced his badge and ID card when Gerry answered his front door. From the front foyer, he led the detective up to the dining room in the raised ranch home. Taking a quick glance around, Davidson noted the house was well appointed, but with a feminine touch.

Gerry pointed to a chair. "Have a seat detective, can I get you a coffee...donut?"

Harley flipped through his notebook, raised an eyebrow. "No. I'm good, thanks."

"My sister's married to a cop...retired. Rod Gauthier?"

"Oh yeah..."

"Do you know Norm Strom? I think he's a detective now."

He knew what Gerry was doing, trying to break the ice. Harley went with it. "I know Norm."

"We grew up in the same neighborhood and hung out before he got on the force. What's this about, you didn't say much on the phone?"

Harley knew the job of a good interviewer was to elicit information, not supply it. "It's about your old neighbourhood. Our records indicate you resided at 3090 Seminole Street, back in the seventies?"

"Yeah, I had an apartment there, before my first marriage. I could walk to the Ford plant where I worked."

"Did you know Chester, or Chas Warner?"

"Name doesn't ring a bell, why?"

"He lived down the hall from you..."

"Got a picture of him?"

Harley picked up the file folder he'd laid on the chair beside him. He produced two old photos, from the original missing person case. "These are old, but maybe they'll jog your memory."

Gerry scanned one, and then the other. He took a second look at each. "I don't know. Maybe. I did a lot of booze and drugs back then. I've been clean and sober for fifteen years now. Hang on...he might be the guy who drove that bomb Grand Prix, purple or red...he liked to smoke the tires when he left the parking lot."

"I have information from a witness who managed the building at the time. He says he saw you removing a green garbage bag from Mr. Warner's storage bin. Do you remember that?"

Gerry thought about it for a few seconds. "Oh, yeah...wow, that was centuries ago. I didn't know whose bin it was but I borrowed some decoy ducks for a guy from work. There were no names on the units, just numbers."

His body language said he was being truthful, so far. "Was there anything else in the bag besides decoys?"

He looked down for a moment, then raised his head and smiled. "If you've been talking to Norm, you know exactly what was in that bag. It was a bonus. I figured, why not keep it? Who calls the cops

and says someone stole their weed? I smoked it and handed some out to friends. Never heard anything more about it. I wasn't living in the building then, but I knew the back door was usually unlocked."

"It was a lot of dope, weren't you worried about who it belonged to?"

"Not for long. I sure as hell wasn't going to take it back and admit to it... 'Hey, I'm sorry for stealing your dope, I only wanted the ducks'. Why all the interest thirty years later...has this got something to do with the bones they found at the grade school?"

"How do you know about that? We haven't released it to the media yet."

Gerry proudly pointed to his police scanner, on the kitchen counter. "I'm nosy. I was at Timmie's having a coffee and heard something going on at the school they're tearing down."

"I didn't think those things picked up our frequencies."

Gerry grinned. "They do if you know what crystals to put in them. And before you ask, no, I don't know anything about the bones. I did a lot of stupid things back in the day, but nothing like that."

Harley sat back in the chair, flipped a few pages in his notebook, and looked at his watch. "Alright Gerry, I guess that about covers it. Thanks for your time."

He walked the detective to the door. "Say hey to Norm for me."

"I will, Gerry. You take care."

Nine

The Sister

I was asleep on the couch when Harley came to pick me up at Station #2. He shook me awake. I struggled to open my eyes, yawned. "Is it morning already?"

"Another late night, what was her name?"

Still groggy, as if awakened from a coma, I rubbed my eyes, sat up and scratched my head. "How'd you make out with Crazy Gerry?"

"I got nothing. The only thing he remembered was Warner's muscle car. He said he was stoned a lot back then."

"He wasn't exaggerating...cost him his first marriage. And that was a cool car...I had a seventy-seven, longer than the seventy-two. Three-fifty, four barrels...you could feel the G forces when you put the hammer down."

"A gas guzzler?"

"Who cared back then, I filled the tank for less than twenty bucks. Ah, the good old days...sex, drugs, rock & roll, and cheap gas."

"I wouldn't know about the drugs; I was a good boy. Get your ass in gear, Sally Warner's expecting us."

Harley drove. I pointed to the side-by-side duplex, on Frank Avenue. "Nine twenty-four? There it is."

We pulled in behind a white Ford Taurus. Harley nodded to it. "I spun by earlier and ran the plate, it's hers."

I unbuckled my seat belt. "Good. You can do the talking...I'll back you up if she gets physical."

"Thanks, partner."

A woman opened the door as we walked up the steps. "I'm Sally Warner, detectives, c'mon in."

We followed her into the living room. The unit was newer, painted in earth tones, with big and bulky furniture. Acting on her invitation, I sunk into one end of the sofa. Harley took the wing back chair facing Sally, who sat on the opposite end of my couch.

The chair was too small for Harley. I was amused watching him squirm, trying to get comfortable. The front legs wobbled and I wondered if the big man would go down. Sally stared at me. "Do I know you, detective?"

"Probably from your meter maid days, we had traffic court on the same days."

"I hated that job. I moved to the parking garage after that, and retired last year. What can I help you with Detective Davidson, you were a bit mysterious on the phone?"

Police investigators purposely held off notifying Sally about her brother's remains. First, we had to make a positive identification. Second, we wanted to gauge her reaction when she received the news. Her wide eyes and open mouth told me that she was genuinely surprised when Harley disclosed the discovery of her brother's body.

She was average in height and weight, with masculine features. Sally wore no make-up and her sandy hair was short and wavy. A deep and raspy voice hinted that she was probably a smoker at one time. As Harley filled her in on the details, I asked to use the restroom. She never took her eyes off him and pointed down the hallway.

I went to the washroom but had just relieved myself at the precinct so I flushed the toilet for effect, then washed my hands and dried them on the hand towel to complete the ruse. Leaving the bathroom, I saw that Sally didn't have a clear view down the hallway. I stepped into what appeared to be the master bedroom. Sterile came to mind—it was completely done in white. There was a single picture in a white frame, on the dresser. A lone print hung on the wall, a grey and black abstract of a woman's silhouette.

Having only spent seconds in that bedroom, I poked my head into another room, across the hall. The walls were sea foam green, and the bed was unmade. There were baseball trophies and medals on the dresser. Harley cleared his throat, my signal to return to the living room.

Seeing that Sally was still engrossed in conversation, I took the long way around the living room, pausing at the fireplace mantle where a collection of picture frames stood in a row. I scanned the photos, taking a second look at one in particular. It was a photo of Sally and another woman. "Excuse me, Sally, this woman in the picture with you...she looks familiar."

"That's Kelly, my partner. She lives with me, but is at work right now."

"Where does she work?"

"She's a paramedic. Maybe you..."

"Probably, we call them all the time when things get messy."

She rolled her eyes. I continued to watch her body language as I gazed around the room. When Harley asked if she knew anyone who might want to harm her brother she said no, but added that her dad wanted to kill him when he found out he was dealing drugs. "That's when he kicked him out of the house and disowned him."

"Did you ever see him get violent with your brother?"

"No. He got loud and obnoxious when he drank, but we knew enough to stay out of his way."

She got up from the couch, clearly signaling the interview was over. Harley nodded to me, handed Sally his business card, and we left the house. I watched Sally as we backed out of the driveway. She was stone-faced, but for a single moment before she closed the door, she appeared concerned.

Harley stopped for the red light at Wyandotte and Lauzon. "I need to pull over somewhere and make some more notes while they're fresh in my mind."

"Let's stop at the Hook...it's on the way and I want to grab a pizza to take home for dinner."

"You know, Norm, I never drank on the job before I knew you."

"Who's drinking on the job? Our shift ended twenty minutes ago."

Seeing us walk in the door, Tommy turned to get our drinks. We sat at the far end of the bar, with our backs to the wall. Harley placed his notebook in front of him as the drinks were delivered.

"I don't know about you, Norm, but I got the impression Sally wasn't too fond of her brother. She seemed genuinely surprised when I told her about finding his remains, but she never asked what happened to him. Wouldn't *you* be curious after thirty years?"

"Sure, I would, but I'm a cop."

"I think anyone would want to know, to have closure."

"The whole family sounds dysfunctional to me...a drug dealer, a lesbian, and war veteran turned cop, who was a drunk."

"I didn't know he had a drinking problem."

I nodded. "In the early years, he's a graduate of the twelve-step program at Brentwood. Saved his career and got him the number two job. If you want to get promoted, fuck up big time then repent and reap your reward. I could name a few guys it's worked for."

Seeing we were nearing empty, Tommy approached and asked if we needed refills. I pointed to both drinks.

Harley asked, "Find anything interesting, in the house?"

"Looks like the happy couple have separate bedrooms...and there's something peculiar about their collection of photos."

"What's that?"

I took a gulp of beer, held the bottle in thought. "Maybe nothing, but Sally had a high school graduation picture of Chas on her dresser."

"So?"

"It was the only picture in the room...sitting there, like a shrine. The rest of the family photos, *except* for his, are on the mantle. I find that odd. He's not part of the family, but he has a private place in her bedroom. What's up with that?"

Harley used the straw to stir his rum and coke. "You know her partner from somewhere?"

"No doubt in my mind—I never forget a face. She said her name was Kelly..."

"...Barker." Tommy interjected. "Kelly Barker. Sorry for eavesdropping Norm, I've known the Warner's for years. I was a year ahead of you and Chas at Herman. They lived near the school and have all come in here at one time or another. They were barred once for getting into a fight on St. Paddy's Day, before I started working here."

We both eyeballed Tommy. Harley asked, "Any idea what the fight was about?"

"Sally and Chas got into a shoving match and knocked a table over. Rumor has it he was banging Kelly before she hooked up with Sally. I guess she played for both teams."

Tommy grinned and nodded. Either he was proud of his sense of humor or he thought he'd solved our case. Harley glanced at me and turned back to Tommy. "Since you know so much about the Warner's, what about Chas' drug dealing and his connection to the Lobos?"

He swiveled his head left and then right, checking to see if anyone else was within earshot. "Norm, you know I like to smoke a little reefer from time to time. I used to buy off Chas, years ago. I don't know who they were but I saw him at the Embassy drinking with

guys wearing colors...could have been Lobos or Queensmen. I don't remember."

Harley's eyes narrowed. "The Embassy?"

I filled him in. "Before your time...it's the Little Memphis Cabaret now, not far from here. Thanks Tommy, can you hit us again?" I turned to Harley. "How far did you go, looking into Chas? Maybe there's something in those old P.I. cards connecting him to the bikers."

Harley paused in thought. "How much would three pounds of weed cost back then?"

"Depends on where it was from. Most of the shit back then was from Mexico, but Columbian stuff started to hit the streets around that time. It was better quality, but twice the price. Either way, it would have been less than two grand. Why, what are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking that no one gets whacked for that kind of money."

"I agree. And there's something else I learned in the drug squad. You don't kill someone when they owe you money...not normally. You can't collect from a dead man."

"True. So, if not the bikers, then we have to look harder at the sister or even the old man."

"Not we, brother. I'm the arson guy, remember? That Kelly chick bothers me though...something tells me there's a drug connection. It'll come to me."

"When it does...if you're not too busy investigating arsons, please let me know."

I glanced over my shoulder, to the kitchen. "My pizza's ready, you wanna help me eat it?"

Ten

Dying Deputy

A week had passed by, with little progress on the Warner case. It stalled. That wasn't unusual with cold cases, and this one was thirty years cold. Most homicides that get solved are done so in the first forty-eight hours. Henry Davidson spent the previous two days in court, on a fraud.

It was a waste of time in his opinion, the convicted fraudster received house arrest, with a promise to make restitution. That was a joke, unless someone developed a method to squeeze blood from a stone. It was Friday, and Harley was told Karl Warner might not make it through the weekend. It was suggested by a higher authority he pay the man a visit.

Esophageal cancer, what a terrible way to go, he thought. Harley sat in a chair beside the hospital bed, watching the old man twitch in his sleep. He was sallow and frail, all life had been sucked out of him by the product of a tobacco leaf. It wasn't fair how something so simple could take down a man who once commanded an entire police force.

A nurse appeared on the opposite side of the bed; Warner woke when she picked up his wrist to check his pulse. Through narrow eye slits, he watched the woman work. When she walked away, he

turned to the detective as if he knew Harley was there the whole time. The corners of his mouth tightened in his feeble attempt to smile, the plastic tube down his throat wouldn't allow it.

Warner pushed a button that elevated the top of his bed. He pointed to the Blackberry on the night table, beside Harley. After turning it on, he thumbed a short message in capitol letters. THANK YOU.

Davidson answered, "For what, Deputy Chief? I haven't done anything."

FOR FINDING MY BOY.

Harley wasn't happy the old man had already been informed of the discovery. It wasn't proper protocol, but he'd received the news from one of his buddies in the upper echelon. "I'm Henry Davidson, sir, I came on the job after you retired. I was assigned your son's case after his remains were found."

Warner nodded and typed, LEADS?

"Nothing yet, sir, but I haven't given up. Somebody out there knows what happened... it's just a matter of finding out who they are and what they know."

The retired deputy reached out and grabbed Harley's wrist. He had a good grip for a dying man. His milky brown eyes widened, watering slightly around the edges. Warner nodded again, and then fingered the message, MADELINE STOREY - PSYCHIC - USED FOR HOMICIDE.

Harley pursed his lips. "I've never heard of her...I'll look into it."

Psychic Story

The fraud office door was locked when Harley returned to headquarters. He looked at his watch; it read 3:05pm. He remembered when he slipped his key into the lock, *oh yeah, it's Friday.* The boss

was on vacation and the others must have taken their lunch hour at the end, calling it a day.

He took off his belt badge and gun holster, and dropped them in his top drawer, thinking maybe he should head home too. A glance at my desk told him he wasn't the only one still working. My laptop was open, the desk lamp on. I never left without shutting everything down. Harley dialed my cell phone.

"Norm Strom."

"Thought I was the only one here, the third floor's deserted."

"Aren't your major crime buddies busy, down the hall?"

Harley punched the name Madeline Story into his computer. "I didn't get down that far, they got something going?"

"They took over my arson in Fontainebleau...it's an attempted murder now. They arrested the husband without telling me. Bradford looked at me like I was a clump of dog shit stuck to the bottom of his shoe. Guess the arrogant asshole forgot he needs me to prove the fire was arson if he wants his charge to stick."

"First I've heard of it, been at the hospital checking in on the Deputy."

"He didn't croak yet? How did he handle the news?"

Harley scrolled through a list of a half dozen Madeline Story's in the data files.

"It was hard to get a read on the man with all those tubes and wires going in and out of him. And someone upstairs filled him in before I got there. Hey, he told me about a psychic...Madeline Story. Know anything about her?"

"Nope. I've only heard talk of her kind being used in the past...those ego maniacs in major crimes wouldn't consider anything so stupid."

"You think it's stupid?"

Norm held his hand over the mouthpiece. Harley heard him talking to someone else.

"Sorry, Jack Knowles is tearing up the wood stairs between levels. We found pour patterns. No, I don't think it's stupid...didn't mean it that way. I have an open mind in that area...my ex went to one when we were still married. She recorded the session...blew me away what he told her. And they'd never met before. He even said shit about me, I'll tell you over drinks some time."

Harley clicked on a case number, the investigation the deputy spoke of.

"Wow, I just found the homicide the old man told me about...with the psychic. It was before my time."

"Guess you're going back down to the vault. I gotta go, Jack needs help bagging samples. Hey, don't lock the office. He picked me up and I don't have my keys with me."

"Good thing you said something. See you Monday, brother."

Eleven

NASCAR

It was Saturday, and Harley's favourite sport was on television. Savannah knew not to bother him, unless she was bringing food or drink. The detective didn't normally bring his work home with him, but he was genuinely curious about the psychic and couldn't wait until Monday. He'd only gotten a few pages into the Emery case, when the NASCAR race started.

A crash in the third lap brought out the caution flag and a halt in the action. The fourth turn on the track resembled a scrap yard, blue smoke curdling in the air. The crowd was on their feet. After watching the slow-motion replay from three different angles, Harley dug into the file. He vaguely remembered reading about the homicide in the newspaper. William Emery had called police to report his eighteen-month-old daughter missing from his home. His wife had gone out shopping for the afternoon.

According to the file, detectives doubted Emery's story from the get go. He had previous convictions for property-related crimes, but the reports of domestic violence were of more concern. A neighborhood canvass uncovered reports of yelling, fighting, glass breaking and the baby screaming and crying.

Emery's initial report said that someone entered his house and took the child from its crib while he was taking a shower. After being pressed for details, he admitted he was watching television with the volume turned up to drown out the baby's constant crying. Upon hearing the news, Lisa Emery was so distraught she had to be sedated. Her story seemed credible.

Harley was distracted by something tickling the back of his neck. Without looking up, he ran his hand over the area. Savannah laughed. "I know you tune me out when you're into the race, but you're not even watching it."

"Huh? There was a crash and they're cleaning up the track."

Savannah snorted. "That was fifteen minutes ago...they're on lap thirty now."

"Really? I got into this case...a murdered baby, back in the early seventies."

She put a plated sandwich on the coffee table. "I'll be out in the garden, doing some weeding. Enjoy the race."

He picked up the plate and placed it on top of the open file in his lap. He took a bite of the sandwich and checked the race for his favourite, the #24 car—Jeff Gordon. He was in the middle of the pack, running with a damaged quarter panel from the earlier pile up. He got the nod from his pit crew, and remained in the race.

Harley maneuvered the sandwich into his mouth with one hand and picked up Karl Warner's report with the other. His gaze bounced from the file to the race, as if he was watching a game of ping pong. He drifted back in time, picturing the baby in its crib.

Savannah was bent over cleaning up the coffee table when his peepers popped open. Harley playfully slapped her ass with the back of his hand. Although a breast man, he couldn't resist the lovely target. He was flat on his back, covered in police reports and bread crumbs.

She asked, "Who won the race, shithead?"

"Ugh..."

Savannah laughed out loud. "You don't know, do you? You dozed off while you were counting dead babies. If you can find the time to clean the barbeque before dinner, I'll tell you who won."

The blonde-haired, blue-eyed mother of his children was only half his size, but he knew better than to mess with her. "It's an interesting case...they used a psychic to find where the baby was buried."

Savannah was on her way to the kitchen with the soiled dishes. "That's freaky. I wonder if they can tell me how long I'll be stuck with your fat ass."

"You've never had it so good. The psychic they used for the baby sounds legit...strange how she never got credit for anything."

She yelled back from the kitchen, "Are you gonna read that crap all weekend or are we taking the bike out tomorrow? Supposed to be a gorgeous day...maybe Norm and his flavor of the month can join us. What's this one's name?"

Harley sat up and reorganized the various reports and files. "Good question, I haven't met her yet. A teacher, I think." He stuffed everything back into the large folder. "I'll clean the barbeque, princess, I'm getting hungry."

Story's Story

Monday morning's downpour was so intense that Harley had to roll down his window to see the address on Roseland Drive. In the driveway, he remained in the car a few minutes hoping the rain would subside. It didn't so he covered his head with the file folder and trotted to the front door.

Although he'd called ahead, it took forever for someone to answer. Harley pressed himself up against the house but he was too wide for the overhang to keep him dry. An elderly woman pushed open the screen door. "Come in out of the rain, young man."

Harley stepped inside. He was soaked. "Mrs. Story?"

"Madeline will do, Detective. I never married."

Another woman of the same age appeared from the kitchen. He placed them in their early eighties. Mushrooms came to mind—the shape of both their heads. It wasn't pronounced but Madeline's forehead was much larger than her thin face and neck. The other woman had a skinny head, with flabby cheeks that flopped over her neck.

"This is my sister, Marjorie, Detective. We're twins, but I'm the elder by twenty minutes. Come into the kitchen, I'll get you a towel to dry off. Do you want a coffee?"

Harley tried to shake himself off at the door so he didn't drip all over the house.

"It's only water, Detective...come in, come in."

Marjorie was first into the kitchen. She removed the coffee pot from the stove and placed it on a tray. Madeline pointed him to a chair at the kitchen table, across from hers. She handed him a tea towel, and they both sat. He wiped his forehead and hands, then the file folder that seconded as his umbrella. Marjorie put the tray in the middle of the table and sat at the opposite end.

"Can I pour you a cup, Detective?"

"Thank you, ma'am, that would be nice."

His eyes wandered around the kitchen while the women prepared the coffee. It was a small framed house, dwarfed by others in the neighborhood, three times its size. The kitchen was dated but it was neat and tidy. Large windows overlooked Roseland Golf Course. "I like that white chair; my wife would love it in her garden."

"Like this house, it was handed down to us by our parents. The chair was my grandmother's, she grew up in Poland. Her mother cleaned for a rich family whose daughter grew close to her when they were children. War and revolution broke the family apart and she never saw Tashia again. She told my grandmother they had to hide their jewels and valuables before the communists took them. Tashia

adored the chair because she sat in it when her mother brushed her hair."

She stopped talking, thinking she was boring the detective. Instead, she passed him a plate of goodies. "Cookie, Detective? They're store-bought. Neither of us can bake worth a damn, pardon my French."

Harley accepted. "Maybe just one...thanks. That's an interesting story, about the chair... makes you wonder who it belonged to. If only it could talk."

Madeline took a sip of her coffee. "You mentioned the Emery baby on the phone, were you on the force back then?"

"No, ma'am, that was before my time. I've read through most of the case though, it was Deputy Chief Warner who gave me your name."

"I'd read that he rose through the ranks. He was a homicide detective when I met him. How is he?"

"Not well, I'm afraid. Stage four cancer and he's not expected to live long."

Marjorie took in a breath. "Dear God, we'll pray for him."

"I'm sure he'll appreciate all the prayers he can get. It's his son's murder I'm looking into."

Both women gasped at the same time. Madeline let a bit of coffee dribble from the corner of her mouth, onto her chin. She caught it with a napkin. "Poor man. That's terrible. I don't recall reading anything about it in the paper."

"It happened a long time ago, that's why I'm here."

Madeline raised her eyebrows and dropped her chin. Her skin grew taught, showing what her wrinkle-free complexion would have looked like forty years earlier. Marjorie picked up her coffee and pushed herself away from the table. "Please excuse me, Detective, that's my sister's area of expertise. I'll be in the living room, reading."

"Don't mind Marjorie. We may be twins but we're different in a lot of ways. Even so, we were quite the team in our day."

"Are you both psychics?"

Madeline puffed air from her lips. "Psychics, savants, clairvoyants, witches...we've been called many names over the years. Our mother's mother was a mid-wife, a healer of sorts. She specialized in herbal medicines and touch healing. We learned our basic skills from her, and then honed them ourselves. The science end of it intrigued us more than anything...it's a common interest we share."

"What kind of skills, how does it work?"

"In some ways, Detective, it's similar to what you do."

"How so?"

"You've been trained to read people, to see if they're lying...their body language?"

"Yes."

"Me too. I can tell by your posture that you're not sure about me or the things you've read that I did when we found the baby."

Harley mentally took note of his body positioning. She was right, he wasn't sure what to make of her. "I mean no offence, ma'am. I admit I'm skeptical but this job has taught me to be that way."

"Like I said earlier, Marjorie and I are different. Where she has exceptional sensory capabilities, I have insight to the spirit and soul."

His confusion and disbelief spoiled Harley's poker face.

"Let me show you an example, Detective." She raised her voice. "Marjorie, how do you like the coffee?"

She answered from the living room. "You bought the Mexican beans again...you know I prefer Colombian."

"And the Detective's cologne?"

"Tangy citrus and woodsy notes with a touch of lavender. Like Father Simmons used to wear. But the lavender scent is much stronger, his wet hair, I presume."

Harley's lips parted, leaving his mouth slightly agape. He stared into Madeline's eyes.

She asked, "Do you know what an aura is?"

"Kind of, like a halo?"

"Yes, some call it that. It takes some concentration, but I can see it...and other things."

He continued to gaze into her eyes as she spoke. Her words flowed smoothly; he soaked them up like a sponge. Her dilated pupils sucked him deeper into her mind, as if he was being hypnotized. It was a strange sensation.

"Your aura is visible now. Would you mind standing for me, Detective?"

She got up from her seat and stood directly in front of him. "Relax and let your arms hang at your sides."

Harley did as she asked. Madeline reached up and held both hands over his head, palms down. Then, slowly, she ran her hands down the side of his body without touching him. He looked down when she reached his forearms. The little hairs were standing on end. She reversed direction, went up and down his mid-section, and then stopped.

"My arms felt tingly for a second."

"That's normal. Your body, like everything else on earth, is a source of energy. Some people, like me, can see that energy. In a healthy body, energy flows smoothly. If you have an ailment, it affects the flow...as in your case."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you take medication for your high blood pressure and sugar?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I can sense the gaps...or blockages in your energy field."

Madeline returned to her seat. Harley remained standing for a moment, in thought. "If it's that simple, why wouldn't doctors use or practice it?"

"That's a good question. We've come to rely on pills and quick remedies these days. Holistic medicine was considered witchcraft at one time. People don't understand the basic self-healing capabilities within their own bodies. Time and science have forgotten ancient secrets and remedies that still work today."

Harley was intrigued. He picked up his empty coffee cup. "Can I trouble you for a refill...and your version of the Emery baby's recovery?"

"By all means...let me top you up. Another cookie?"

"Not according to my blood sugar..."

"I meant no offence. I was just trying to help you understand what I do."

"None taken. Go on, please."

Madeline folded her hands in front of her and stared at a spot just above Harley's head. "It's funny how we met, Detective Warner and me. He worked in Morality back then. Someone had complained to the police that we were a couple of gypsy fortune tellers, who were ripping people off. He later confessed to me that an angry husband made the complaint after I told his wife he was cheating."

Harley chuckled, but apologized and told her to continue.

"Anyway, he called me up after the Emery baby went missing. He suspected foul play by the father and asked for my input. He let me into the family's home, where I looked at the crib and baby's belongings. There was a lot of anger in that house, the air was thick as ants on a cookie crumb."

"You knew the father was responsible...that the baby was dead?"

"I felt it right away but I saw all the other policemen talking behind my back. I told Detective Warner how I felt and he believed

me, said he'd suspected the father all along. He brought me back to the house the next day when nobody was around."

"And that's when his partner claimed someone saw the father burying his child in the empty lot out back."

"They argued about it. His partner said it was an anonymous tip and he couldn't give up the name. The truth is he saw me walking around the grave site before I told Detective Warner about it. The other detective said he'd gotten a phone call and was waiting for help to dig up the area. Warner was beside himself but satisfied the baby was found and he was able to close the case."

"So that's why you never received any recognition for finding the baby's body?"

"I wasn't in it to garner attention. I was happy to see the father arrested and the mother get closure. I couldn't imagine her pain. The father's deception was revealed publicly and Detective Warner got promoted shortly after. He sent me a big fruit basket to show his appreciation."

Harley was a man who didn't impress easily, but Madeline Story was one woman he would not forget. Whether or not she could help him with his case, he was glad he met with her. He turned to look out the window. The rain had let up but the sun was still hiding behind a curtain of grey.

He eyed the wise woman across the table from him. "Do you have any plans tomorrow, Madeline?"

Twelve

Ghosts

Madeline Story was standing inside her front door when Detective Davidson pulled into her driveway. He was distracted by her lush landscaping and didn't notice the old woman until she stepped onto the porch. The previous day's rain had cleansed the air and perked up the perennial border around the house. Her thick green lawn extended out onto the golf course.

Harley got out of the car to open Madeline's door, but she beat him to it. She was pretty spry for her age. "Thank you for your gallant effort, Detective, but I'm quite capable of fending for myself."

"Sorry, it's how I was brought up...to respect women and my elders. Lovely day, isn't it?"

"It surely is, Detective. What do we have planned for today?"

"Two things. I'm not sure which you might be able to help me with but I have nothing to lose. The deceased's remains were returned to us yesterday, I'd like to start there."

Madeline fussed with her seat belt, trying to secure the buckle. "Oh my, I've never done anything like this before." She sighed at the sound of the click.

"I'll take any help I can get. The case is thirty years old...it's hard to find credible witnesses, and next to impossible to recover any

physical evidence. I'd like you to have a look at the skeletal remains to see if you get any vibes or whatever it is that you get."

"I can't promise anything, it's not something I have control over."

Harley turned onto Dougal Avenue and headed toward the expressway. "Then I'm going to take you to the site where we found the victim's remains."

She wet her lips and raised her eyebrows. "Sounds like a ghastly but exciting field trip. I hope I can offer some insight."

"Me too."

The bones were laid out on a baron steel table in the morgue at Metropolitan Hospital. Madeline tiptoed towards the remains, as if she had to be quiet for some reason. She jumped when the door slammed shut behind Harley.

"Sorry." He stood in one corner of the room. "I'll give you some time to do your thing. Feel free to ask any questions."

"It's so cold in here."

"Do you need a sweater or jacket?"

"I'm fine. It's just...death is all around us. It must be this place. I'm not getting anything from these remains, no energy or life signs at all."

Harley stepped over to the head. "Let me try this..." He pointed to the skull fractures. "These wounds led to the cause of death, what we call blunt force trauma."

Madeline slowly circled the table and stopped to examine the skull. She paused in thought, then gazed into the empty air above the table, her eyes circling the room.

"Anything?"

"Sorry, nothing from these remains. But your father's standing behind you, looking over your left shoulder."

"What?"

"He's smiling. It's a sense of pride...he's regretful he didn't spend more time with you. He wants me to let you know he's proud of the man you've become."

Instinctively, Harley snapped his head back to look over his shoulder. He spun half way around, and then back to stare at Madeline. His mouth hung open, but no words spilled from his lips. He stuttered, "M-my f-father...I barely knew the man. How would you know about him?"

"I told you I have no control over these things. Besides you and me, your father was the only other life force in the room."

"Was...he's gone now?'

"Yes. He's satisfied I was able to express his feelings to you."

"I'm sorry but that's just too weird. If there's nothing else here, I'd like to move on."

"I didn't mean to offend you, Detective."

Harley opened the door and tilted his head, showing Madeline the way out.

They remained silent in the car, heading to the body retrieval site. Harley broke the ice. "I'm sorry if I reacted badly, earlier. I wasn't expecting to hear anything like that. A friend of mine recently told me how insightful people like you can be."

"You mean the other policeman...the one with a motorcycle like yours?"

"You're freaking me out, Madeline. How could you know these things?"

She offered a soft smile. "It's not what I know. It's who we are...what we carry around with us. When you pulled into my driveway and I got into the car you were admiring the day, wishing you were out on your bike. I saw an image of you and your friend riding together."

Harley kept his eyes on the road and shook his head. "This is unbelievable...sorry, you know what I mean. It's hard to believe what I'm hearing, but it's all true. I always thought..."

"That's the problem with the world today. We *think* when we should be watching, listening and feeling. These things I see are there for everyone to see. You have to learn how to focus, filter out distortion and tune yourself in. I admit not everyone can do it. Some call it a gift, but it can also be a curse. Everyone wants to hear their fortune or future, but only the good stuff. I see it all."

"Amazing. You are an extraordinary woman. Maybe you will do better at the burial site. We're almost there."

Raising the Dead

Harley was twenty feet away from the car when he realized Madeline wasn't directly behind him. She was standing in front of the car, staring into the empty lot.

"It's over this way, Madeline."

She called out to him. "Children playing...lots of children. There must have been a school here at one time."

"Yes, there was. It was recently torn down and the excavation company discovered the remains."

Madeline caught up with Harley. He led her to an area near the middle of the lot where a section of earth had been taped off. "This is where we found the body."

"No." She turned and walked away.

"Yes, Madeline. This is exactly where we dug up the bones."

She stopped about ten paces away from the grave. "I agree, but this is where it happened. This is where he died. Sorrow...I feel a woman's sorrow."

"A woman? The victim was male."

"I know, but I feel a woman's anguish...so much distress before he died."

"I'm not following you, Madeline."

She stood in thought for a moment. "He was conflicted...about so many things, his identity for one. He felt unloved, neglected, misunderstood. He was so sad, and angry."

"I'm not sure how that's going to help me."

"You're looking for someone close to him, Detective, someone who loved and hated him at the same time. I feel jealousy and betrayal but his death wasn't premeditated. He was killed in a fit of rage but the killer was remorseful the moment the deed was done. Shame and embarrassment...the body was buried to keep a secret."

Davidson seemed unfazed. "The fact he was murdered is quite obvious.".

She continued. "There's more to it than that. The conflict isn't clear and he didn't die right away. He was holding something with a long wood handle before he met his demise...a broom, I think."

Harley stared at the ground, scratched his chin. "A broom?"

"He wore work boots and had calloused hands...like a construction worker perhaps."

"Interesting. I'll have to find out who the contractor was back then, when the cement pad was laid. Anything else?"

Madeline gazed into the open field. "Just children...lots of children, singing and playing in the school yard."

Thirteen

Fire by the Fire Hall

My cell phone in hand, I tried to make a call but forgot the name and couldn't find the number. An unrecognizable list of names appeared on the screen. I tried pressing different buttons but nothing seemed to work. Then it rang but I couldn't answer the call. I woke from a deep sleep, holding my phone. It was ringing.

"Norm Strom."

"Hey, Norm, it's Staff Sergeant Richards...were you sleeping?"

I tried to clear the frog from my voice and sat up in bed. "What's up?"

"It's only ten o'clock, kind of early for you, isn't it?"

I cleared my throat and made a guttural noise that echoed in the phone. "I'm sick...went to bed early."

"We've got a fire on Walker Road and the Fire Inspector is asking for you. Should I call your backup, Giroux? The list shows you on call."

"He's out of town, call Henry Davidson. I've been teaching him the ropes so he can take over when I retire. He knows enough to get started."

"Retire? How long have you been here?"

"I've got my thirty in, I'm fireproof now."

"An arson investigator who's fireproof...that's a good one. I'll call Davidson. Get better and don't die before you collect your first pension cheque."

I ended the call and went to the bathroom. Sitting on the toilet, I glanced in the mirror and scared myself. My hair was matted on one side and sticking up on the other. I flushed the toilet and looked closer in the mirror. There was crusty drool on one corner of my mouth and moustache. I shook my head and went back to bed.

It was 8:00 am when the phone woke me again. I recognized Harley's number on the display.

"How you making out, brother?"

"Half of the block across from #2 Fire Station burned down...five separate businesses. Norm, it's the place you got the tip about—the one you told the brass would burn."

"Shit. Guess they'll believe me now. You got a handle on things?"

"Not really. Jack Knowles is here to walk me through the scene, he had to call in the Fire Marshall because of the dollar value. And there's the Peckerhead...he caught wind I was out here and blew a gasket."

"Asshole. You're not on his clock, it's been all overtime up to now."

"He doesn't see it that way and he's coming out here. How're you feeling, can you come out and lend a hand?"

I was already out of bed, searching bathroom drawers for daytime cold meds. "I'll see you in forty-five. Need a coffee or anything?"

"No, I'm good, the fire hall's right across the street and they're taking care of us. Funny how someone had to call 911 to report a raging fire a few hundred feet from their house."

"Where else can you get paid to sleep on the job?"

I popped two cold capsules and two super-sized vitamin C tablets into my mouth. I laughed at my goofy hairdo, once again. At least I still had a thick head of brown hair. Only a few grey ones had found

their way into my side burns. My goatee was a different matter, it was mostly grey and white.

I tripped over my cat on the way into the kitchen. "I suppose you want some breakfast, eh big guy? What do you want today...tuna or chicken?" King walked in circles, rubbing himself on my legs. I stumbled again. "If you get out of the way this would go a lot faster."

Told Ya So

The smell of smoke was noticeable from the Tim Horton's, about a half mile from the fire scene. The blaze was no surprise to me, I'd gotten a call from an old informant a week and a half earlier. I had a working relationship with Ronny Girard when I worked in narcotics. He was a rounder from way back, connected to all sorts of criminal enterprises. Before leaving the Drug Squad, I signed Ronny up as an agent with the Mounties. They paid better.

The last I heard they were using him for a project out of town. Ronny called out of the blue and told me he knew who was going to burn down the industrial complex at Walker and Richmond. He said one of the property owners asked him to find a torch to do the job so he could collect the insurance money.

When I met with my informant, he played a recording of the conversation where he introduced the owner to the torch. The recording was illegal and could never be used in court but Ronny didn't care. For me, it was enough to put the owner at the top of our suspect list if something happened. It was supposed to occur within two weeks, the owner wanted it done while his partner was out of the country.

I informed my superiors, suggesting surveillance on the torch and/or the property but they didn't think the police service could afford to do that. Ronny laughed when I told him. He said he stood

to make money on the tip if the place actually burned. It was the sad truth.

Not being a coffee drinker, I ordered a Diet Pepsi to wash down my toasted multi-grain bagel, with cream cheese and bacon. I could eat bacon at every meal if I thought it wouldn't kill me. I got two chocolate chip cookies for Harley.

Uniformed cops had Walker Road blocked off at Ottawa Street so I drove north up Monmouth Road and went into the back entrance of Fire Station #2, off Ontario Street. After parking my car and walking through the parking lot, I stopped on the sidewalk in front of the station. A fireman in the bucket of an aerial truck was dousing a hot spot from high above the smoldering buildings.

Davidson and Knowles were standing in the rubble at the southwest corner of what was previously a flag store. Only partial brick walls remained beyond that. The site was a hodgepodge of different businesses which were added on to or joined together over the years. The northeast corner was still intact. More firemen were positioned there, streaming water through the broken windows. No flames were visible, but heavy smoke still billowed into the air.

They didn't hear me come up from behind them. "I see it's the blind leading the blind, sorry Harley." I handed him the bag of cookies.

Jack asked, "Where's mine?"

"I thought you were on a diet?"

"You could've brought me a coffee."

I flipped my thumb over my shoulder. "You've got all the free coffee you want, back there in your house." I looked at Harley. "Has Peckerhead been here yet?"

He opened the bag and handed Jack a cookie. "Yeah, he couldn't care less about the multi-million-dollar fire and only wanted to be briefed on the Warner case so he'd look good at the Chief's morning meeting."

Jack mumbled, his mouth full of sugar and dough. "Let's go inside, I need a coffee to wash this down. We can't do much until the OFM gets here."

The three men stumbled over pieces of charred wood and broken bricks as they walked back to the fire hall. Jack popped the last piece of cookie into his mouth. "I thought you were sick Norm...nothing contagious I hope?"

"I'm good now, just a bit of medicine head." I pulled open the front door at the fire hall and let the other guys lead the way in. "Jack, anyone call the owner yet?"

"Yeah, he's on the way here. Says his partner is due home from Poland in a couple days, but he wants to talk to us."

"I bet he does. Have you got a room where we can do a proper interview?"

"Captain's office maybe, I'll set something up."

Jack left us sitting at the lunchroom table. The smell of hot soup hung in the air.

"What do you want to do, Harley? I can surely use some help on this one...interviewing the owner, witnesses...I don't want Peckerhead on your ass. Hey, how'd you make out with that psychic?"

"Oh my god, you won't believe what she told me."

"Case solved...the butler did it in the library with the candlestick?"

Jack walked back into the lunchroom and peered into the large pot of soup that was on the stove. "Smells good...beef barley." He was talking to himself.

Harley reached across the table and tapped me on the forearm. "I'll fill you in later...I should head to HQ and get back into the other thing."

"No problem, brother. Why don't you give me a shout before the end of the day, maybe we can chat over cocktails?"

"Sounds good." He turned to Knowles. "See you later, Jack."

"Typical cop, leave the firemen to do the grunt work."

"I'll be sure to call you personally, next time my neighbor's cat gets stuck in the tree."

Fourteen

Connecting the Dots

It was dark when Harley's eyes creaked open before his alarm. He dreamt about an argument with the brass over Chester Warner's killer. The group of top dogs sat gathered around a long wood table in the executive meeting room. From his end, the men at the other end seemed a mile away.

The Peckerhead was convinced the lesbian sister was responsible, solely because of her sexual preferences. The chief thought it was bikers over an outstanding drug debt. Another white shirt piped up; he thought Karl Warner might be responsible. Harley was shocked when he realized it was his father talking and wearing the police uniform. The men argued amongst themselves.

A stream of hot water from the shower head sprayed directly into Harley's face. He turned the temperature down until he felt the cooling effect. The image of his father seated at the large table faded with the heat below his skin. He had to get the new day organized. There had been too many distractions but he didn't mind helping Norm at the fire scene. After all, the arson job would be his when Strom pulled the plug. He felt a chill and shut the water off.

Traffic was lighter than normal on his way to work but he was almost two hours early. The peaceful drive allowed him to sort

through his thoughts. He was glad Norm was too busy to hook up for drinks the previous night. What he hoped would be a good night's sleep turned into a patchwork of weird dreams and an early wakeup.

It was strange, he thought, seeing the lights on at such an early hour. Harley was shocked when he saw me at my desk, tapping away on the laptop. "You pull an all-nighter?"

"Yeah, gotta get search warrants for the owner's business and financials if we want to try and charge him with arson."

"You must be wiped out...are you feeling any better?"

"Got my second wind now. I caught some shut-eye after the Fire Marshall got there...he and Knowles spent a few hours digging around, looking for the point of origin."

"So, the owner looks good for it?"

"Yep. Really gotta get this done before the courthouse opens up. I'll fill you in later...I wanna hear more about that psychic."

Harley unlocked his desk drawers and sat down. "No problem, I'm going across the hall into the project room. You can have the office to yourself."

I was too busy to lift my head and waved him off. Harley packed up what he needed from his desk and carried it across the hall. Plopping his files on one end of the table he stood in thought, looking at the stacks of boxes and folders. He busied himself organizing the clutter into piles, from old to new, alphabetically.

Once everything was in order, he wiped the magic board clean. He taped up Chas Warner's photograph in the center. Then he placed the other photos he had in a row on the left, there were only two so far. The father and sister. He thought about the lesbian partner for a moment, and then sat down to leaf through a high school yearbook.

"Hey, that looks like my high school—Green Griffins rock!"

"I thought you were trying to get your search warrants done?"

"That was hours ago. I'm waiting for the judge's secretary to call me back with a yea or nay."

Harley clucked. "What are you worried about, you've never been denied yet, have you?"

"Nope. Did you find Chas in there?"

"You were quite the jock...nice picture in your Speedo, with the water polo team."

I scoffed. "Yeah, that was about thirty years and twice as many pounds ago. Let me see that..."

Harley flipped to a page he had dog-eared and handed the book to me. "I found Kelly Barker...remember her? She was two years behind you."

I studied the picture. "Holy shit, that's her!"

"I know, what's the big deal?"

"That's the carpet muncher...Sally's girlfriend."

"I know, I know...why are you so excited?"

"Because Kelly is Kandy with a K...she used to live with one of my informants."

"Huh? You lost me."

I moved a stack of files off a chair across from him, sat down and stared at the picture. "I told you I never forget a face...back then her partner was a crack head whore who'd go on binges and disappear for days on end. Kandy would call the drug squad to tell us where her honey was buying her crack so we'd bust the dealer and she'd have to go home. I think Kandy was selling her ass on the side too, both women were pretty hard core. You should have a chat with her...maybe she can add another piece to your puzzle."

Harley sat listening, his eyes widening with each word I uttered. He leaned back in his chair, scratched his goatee, and glanced at the white board. "I guess maybe I should add another photo to my collection. Kandy...aka Kelly Barker."

My cell phone rang and I checked the call display. "Looks like my warrants are ready...gotta go, but I want to hear about the psychic." I returned the yearbook and left the room.

Harley called out after me. "Good luck with your search."

He took the yearbook across the hall to the fraud office and photocopied the page with Kelly's picture on it. While he played with the machine's buttons to enlarge the photo, he remembered that exotic dancers and escorts had to be licensed by the city. It was worth a shot. Satisfied with the photocopy, he called city hall from the phone at his desk.

A clerk with a snotty attitude answered the call and said any record was probably in the archives and she was too busy to look. When he asked to speak to her supervisor, she changed her tune and assured him she would find some time and email him a copy if and when she found something. A shadow lurked over his desk. "Detective Davidson, I've been looking for you." It was Inspector Graves.

"I've been across the hall in the project room all morning."

"The chief wanted an update on the Warner case, but I had nothing to offer other than the fact you were sidelined at the Walker Road fire. Don't worry, I covered your ass...I take care of my guys."

Harley ignored the bullshit. "I have a lead I'm working on right now. Sally Warner's partner...she knew Chester Warner back in the day."

"So?"

"Well, there may have been a love triangle...or maybe he was supplying her with drugs and Sally didn't like it."

"Did you interview her yet?"

"She's next on my list. I could work a lot faster with a little help."

The inspector was already out the door. "Keep me in the loop."

Odd Jobs

Harley went back to the project room and taped up Kelly's picture. He drew blue lines connecting each person of interest to Chas Warner. Then he drew red lines connecting Chas and the two women. On the right side of the board, he chronologically listed events prior to the victim's death. When he got to the burial, he remembered he'd forgotten to find out who the contractor was that laid the cement pad.

He got the same stunned response from a clerk at the school board as the woman from city hall. He assumed in both cases; they had not even been born when the murder took place. Once again, he was told they would get back to him. *Construction work.* The thought exploded in his mind, something he remembered seeing on the victim's tax return.

Harley flipped through the file he'd marked 'Historical'. Luckily, he had a contact at Revenue Canada who was kind enough to forward the tax returns Warner filed before he died. Normally, police would require a search warrant for that kind of information. He found the returns from 1974 to 1976, when Chas was still in school. There wasn't much in them, Warner only listed minimal income from part time jobs.

"Yes!" Harley shouted out loud. A T-4 slip included in his last return was submitted by Santorini & Son Construction. According to the dates listed, Warner worked for the company after school and on weekends. A call to the company's phone number resulted in another perplexed clerk. She said they only kept records on file for ten years."

Harley asked to speak to Mr. Santorini but was told that he'd passed away years earlier. Left with nothing but silence on the other end of the phone, he asked about the owner's son. It was as if she woke from a deep sleep. "Junior is at a job site right now."

Having to prompt the clerk, he asked for Junior's cell number. She clucked, probably realizing she should have done that in the first place. He was about to leave a message when someone answered the call. "Santorini & Son, Joe here."

Harley considered going out to interview the man personally, but he was anxious to obtain any new information. He could always confirm it later. There was heavy machinery noise and an irritating beeper in the background that made it difficult to hear Santorini. At Harley's request, Junior got into his pickup truck to continue the conversation in a quieter location.

Santorini was foggy at first, but said he remembered Chas Warner from high school. Harley wondered if junior bought dope off of him too. He talked in circles, like his mind was on the work going on outside his vehicle. "Oh yeah, now I remember...we had the school board contract back then. Chas worked part time for us, he did clean up at job sites after school. We'd have him hang around to watch the cement dry...you know...to keep the kids from carving their names in it, or worse."

He couldn't remember which schools Warner worked at, but agreed that he might have worked on the addition at the grade school, where they built a new boiler room. Junior said his father had a memory for things like that. His own son did too, but couldn't spell the word construction, let alone do the work. "He's good with numbers...I let him do the books."

Harley thanked Santorini for his time. He looked at the clock; it was an hour past noon. No wonder his stomach was growling. After looking over his work on the board once more, he decided it was time for lunch. He planned the rest of his afternoon in his head, while he locked up the project room and left the building to eat.

Fifteen

A.K.A.

With all the ducks in a row, Harley thought it was time to meet the mystery woman, Kelly. He thought it should be an interesting conversation with what he'd managed to dig up on her. Sally answered the phone when he called the house. She got defensive right off and demanded to know why he wanted to speak to Kelly. He explained how he had to talk to everyone who knew her brother, if he was to find out what happened to him. She said she would relay the message.

Later that evening, after dinner, he received a call from Kelly. She said she was working afternoons, but could be available in the morning. Harley asked her to meet him at police headquarters. That way, he knew he could question her without interference from Sally.

At 9:05am the next morning, the detective received a call from the front desk, saying he had a visitor. He told the constable to send her up to the third-floor lobby. Having already prepped an interview room, he went to meet Kelly. Harley wasn't surprised to find Sally sitting beside her.

Once again, she voiced her objection when he asked Kelly to accompany him, alone. She raised her voice. "She doesn't know

anything...I don't know why you're harassing her. Shouldn't we get a lawyer?"

Harley stopped in his tracks and glared at Sally. "This is only an interview and she is not under arrest for anything. You surely have the right to call a lawyer, but I would have thought you'd want to help in any way possible, to find out what happened to your brother."

Kelly patted her on the shoulder. "It's okay, honey, I've got nothing to hide. I'll be fine." She turned to follow the detective.

Sally took a step forward but Harley put a hand up. "You can wait right here. We won't be long.

She scoffed and plopped her ass down on a chair near the elevator.

Detective Davidson formerly introduced himself, and he had Kelly do the same, telling her their conversation was being recorded. Her eyes darted to the camera in the corner. She nodded that she understood. He wasted no time and went directly at her for a reaction. "You introduced yourself as Kelly Barker. Should I call you that or Kelly Clark, or Kandy Clark?"

She didn't answer and looked away. Her eyes glazed over, almost as if she was about to cry. Harley was surprised by the reaction, which confirmed his suspicions that she wasn't proud of her past. She remained silent.

"The reason I ask, Kelly, is because I did an extensive background check on you and found some interesting things. Exotic dancer, convictions for prostitution, drugs, shoplifting and fraud. You have outstanding warrants under one alias, but they've long expired."

She straightened in her chair and snapped back. "Like you said, that stuff was a long time ago. I work at Chrysler's now, and have settled down with Sally. I had a rough patch years ago but I've moved on with my life."

Harley saw she'd gained her confidence back so he pressured her again. "But the warrants for shoplifting and fraud are still valid...under your alias, Kelly Clark."

The woman stared at the table, going silent again. He thought she was attractive, in a masculine way. She had sparkly green eyes and high cheekbones some women pay dearly for. Her dirty blonde hair, tied back in a ponytail, rested on broad shoulders. From there down, she had an athletic build. "Sally doesn't know anything about that stuff."

Harley slid his chair around to the corner of the table, moving closer to her. It was an interview technique used to get more intimate, once her guard was down. "Look, Kelly, I really don't care about that stuff. I just want to find out what happened to Chas Warner. Maybe we can start when you first met him...if that's easier for you."

She lifted her head and took a deep breath. Water in her eyes crested—about to break free. She sighed and relaxed her shoulders.

"We met in high school. Chester. That's what I called him, but he hated it. We lost our virginity to each other and we were best friends. He was shy when we met, but that changed in high school."

Harley knew it was time to shut up and listen. "How so?"

"He hated his old man and everything he stood for...the war he fought in, his job as a cop, and his heavy drinking. He was a mean drunk."

"Did he abuse Chester?" It was important to re-use her own words, keep her comfortable.

"Not physically, but he was always on him for something...his long hair, loud music, lack of interest in sports. Chester liked that his old man worked a lot, so he didn't have to deal with him."

"Did you know about his drug dealing?"

"It was only weed. He didn't even drink, didn't want to be like *him*. He said smoking pot relaxed him, and he made a few bucks

selling to his friends, so what? The old man never gave him a dime...expected him to fend for himself, so that's what he did."

Three Ways

"What about Sally? There's obviously more to the story since you're living with her now."

"I met her through Chester. We all got along well...I think he was jealous that her and I became so close."

Even though the conversation was being recorded, Harley penned a few highlights. "Can you explain to me how you went from Chester to his sister, intimately, was that intentional?"

"Chester and I only had sex a few times. We experimented with what we thought boys and girls were supposed to do. It wasn't comfortable for either one of us. I was more attracted to Sally that way."

"So, you started dating Sally and Chester found other girlfriends?"

Kelly raised her brow. "No. Chester was gay...that's why we were such close friends."

Harley threw his head back and slouched in his chair, as if he'd just taken an uppercut to the chin from Joe Frazier. "Chester was a homosexual?"

"Yeah, that's why his old man kicked him out of the house. Said he didn't have a son...didn't want a faggot living under his roof."

"I thought he got kicked out for dealing drugs?"

"That was easier for the family to admit."

"What about Sally, didn't they know about her?"

"Her mother did, but it wasn't until years later the old man found out, after he quit drinking and found god."

Harley paused, flipped through the file in front of him for effect, and then made eye contact with Kelly. "What do you know about Chester's disappearance?"

Her face froze. She blinked rapidly, trying not to look away. Her tears had already run their course down her face and landed in her lap. Harley waited patiently for an answer.

"Is Sally going to get in trouble?"

"For what, did she do something wrong?"

"It's her fault Chester moved out west. They had a fight and their old man told him he should get out of town...start a new life elsewhere."

"Kelly. Do you really think that's what happened? We found Chester's remains here in Windsor, not out west."

She fought to hold them back, but a second wave of tears broke free. She pinched the top of her nose with her fingers in an attempt to stem the flow. "I always believed that's what happened...it's what I wanted to believe. We had a fight after you came by our place. I confronted her about it...said it didn't make any sense, finding his body here. Sally broke down and told me what happened...how her dad made it all go away, to save his and the family's reputation."

"What did she tell you?"

Kelly wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, sniffed. "Sally got mad at Chester when she found out we'd slept together, thought we still were because we were so close. She went to see him at the school near their house, to tell him to stay away from me. He was sweeping up at a construction site.

They got into a heated argument and he shoved her when she got in his face. Sally said Chester fell when she pushed back and he hit his head on the cement. She saw blood in his ear and freaked out."

Harley's adrenalin kicked in. He wanted to jump up and cheer but remained composed. "Then what did she do?"

"She ran home and told the old man. He left her at the house and came back about an hour later. Daddy told her he had a good talk with Chester and convinced him to move out west to start his

life over. She asked about her brother's injuries but he said Chester was fine and not to worry about it."

"Anything else?"

"That's all she told me."

"So, what does she think now that we've found her brother's remains right where she left him thirty years ago?"

"She freaked out when I asked her that same question. Thinks her old man was trying to cover up for her...that maybe she accidentally killed him. Sally never spoke to him about it but she's thinking about asking him now. She doesn't know what to do...that's why she didn't want you talking to me. I think she wants to see him first. So, what's going to happen now?"

"I don't know, Kelly. Obviously, I'm going to have to hear Sally's side of this...and then her father's."

"What's going to happen with my charges?"

"I think we can work something out. Let me talk to the crown attorney and see what he wants to do. You're looking at some fines for sure, maybe a term of probation added on."

Harley was bursting at the seams, he wanted to charge out of the interview room and tell someone what happened. Tell everyone. Kelly used a hand to wipe her dripping nose.

"I have to make a phone call. I'll bring you a tissue when I come back."

Sixteen

Family Matters

"Arrest her!" Were the first words out of the mouth of Inspector Graves. "You've got a thirty-year-old body and a witness who puts his sister at the scene. Jealousy is a strong motive."

"But what about Deputy Warner, Inspector? He was involved in this. Are you giving him a free pass because he's dying or because of who he was?"

"I think you're out of line, Detective. Whom gets charged with what will be up to the Crown Attorney. He can make that decision so we don't look like we're showing favoritism. Where's the sister now?"

"She's still in the lobby, as far as I know. I left her partner in the interview room. I was going to..."

"One of my guys can take it from here, Davidson. You did well, but now that we're looking at a murder charge, major crimes will take over."

Harley couldn't believe his ears. He felt the warmth of his blood flowing into his neck and face. He was about to blow his cork, when the superintendent of investigations spoke up. He was in the room and had been quietly listening to the conversation. "Yes, Inspector, you are right about Detective Davidson doing a good job on this,

and that's why you'll let him see it through. He's gotten us this far and I think he's more than capable of carrying on."

"But sir..."

"But nothing, Inspector. What do you need to close this case, Detective?"

"Well sir..." Harley went on and laid out his plan to the superintendent. He wanted to keep Kelly on ice while he interviewed Sally and got her version of the events. Then he wanted to interview the retired deputy. He asked for advice in how to deal with the dying man.

The superintendent ordered the inspector to give Davidson the help he needed, someone to process Ms. Barker's charges and someone else to babysit the deputy at the hospital until Harley was ready to deal with him. The inspector began to protest but with the wave of a hand from the Superintendent, the matter was settled.

Harley prepped the second interview room the same as the first. They were separated by a video monitoring area the size of a shoe box. The Peckerhead let himself into the room and slinked into a chair in front of the monitors. "Thought I'd watch to make sure you don't screw things up."

The detective retrieved Sally Warner from the lobby, and purposely walked her past the viewing window where Kelly was visible inside the interview room. He offered Sally a nod and flat grin, signaling the jig was up. She slithered into the next interview room as if it was the last place on earth she wanted to be.

Her face appeared bloodless under the fluorescent lighting. She sat in the chair Detective Davidson pointed to, but squirmed as if sitting on broken glass. Harley read Sally her rights to counsel, something he was legally obliged to do once she had ascended from person of interest, to suspect.

Having worked in parking enforcement, spending plenty of time in court, and being the daughter of the deputy chief of police, Sally

knew enough to exercise her constitutional right and asked for a lawyer. She looked like she wanted to jump out of her skin, but once she lawyered up there was little Harley could do. He would be chastised later in court if he questioned her further without legal representation. Anything she said would not be inadmissible in court. The interview was over.

End of the Line

At the hospital, Harley briefed the young detective who was posted outside the deputy's room. He peeked around the door frame and saw the old man was awake. Detective Pindus nodded as Davidson went over the game plan. The rookie detective was new to major crimes, having been promoted from ESU. Another golden boy with virtually no investigative experience.

He was told to observe and stand on the opposite side of the bed so the deputy couldn't see them both at the same time. It was his job to make a video record of the interview. Warner's forehead wrinkled with confusion when he saw a new face, then relaxed when he saw Davidson. Then, looking back at Pindus and seeing the video camera, Warner's whole body twitched.

He grabbed his Blackberry from the night table and thumbed the keyboard. WHATS GOING ON?

Harley eyed the young detective, who nodded that he was recording. He sat down in the chair beside Warner's bed. Looking at the empty shell of the person in front of him, a powerful man who was once the second-in-command of an entire city police force, Davidson wondered if guilt was the real cancer that ate away at him. No matter, fate was there now, knocking on his door.

Harley flipped open his notebook and read Karl Warner his rights to counsel. As he did so the retired deputy's arm fell limp at his side and the Blackberry fell to the floor. Davidson further explained that

he wasn't being formerly charged with anything at that time but his daughter, Sally, would be charged with manslaughter.

Warner's face grew as white as the pillow beneath his head. The deputy's eyes welled with water and tears rolled across his temples. He glanced toward the door, over to Pindus, and then to Davidson, as if he was looking for someone to rescue him from his nightmare. Staring at Harley, his eyes narrowed. He moved his mouth as if he was trying to say something, but the plastic hoses prevented him from speaking.

He closed his eyes tight, squeezing out any tears that remained in them. Then he reached for the Blackberry. Harley retrieved it from the floor and handed it to him. Warner paused in thought for a second. He winced at if in severe pain, then his entire body went rigid and the electronic heart monitor's alarm sounded. His gaze remained on Detective Davidson but a bright light at the end of the tunnel was the only thing Warner could see.

Seventeen

Future Flames

I laughed out loud when Harley asked me how the polygraph test went.

"That well, huh?"

"Inconclusive...does anybody ever fail the fucking test? Anyone can go on the internet and find five ways to beat the damn things."

We were discussing the owner of the torched property on Walker Road, where my informant warned me of the impending fire, then offered a recording of the owner and arsonist discussing the torch job. Nothing but legalities and technicalities, roadblocks for what should have been a slam-dunk case.

I shook my head and tossed the file on my desk. "Who says crime doesn't pay? I think we're in the wrong business, brother."

"Same ones who said you can't get away with murder."

"I heard...sweetheart of a deal for Sally. Double secret probation for Kelly and the old man checked out before paying his tab. At least the taxpayers didn't have to foot the bill for an expensive trial where you wouldn't have done any better. I wonder what Chas would think...wherever he is. Hey, I've been meaning to ask you about that psychic, what she said that got you so rattled."

"Let me show you, let's go for a ride."

"Where? What are you talking about?"

"I want you to meet the old girls—the psychics. I was going to call and tell them how the case turned out, but it'll be more fun in person."

I leaned back in my chair. "Psychics, there's more than one?"

"You'll see."

We pulled into the driveway on Roseland Drive and I said, "Nice place, the property's got to be worth a bundle. Is that them...the two old biddies in the garden?"

"Yep, Madeline and Marjorie...the psychic sisters. Twins."

"No shit."

Madeline stood up and turned around, but she didn't recognize me or my vehicle. She smiled when Harley got out of the passenger side. Marjorie was on her hands and knees, pulling weeds. She waved, but continued working. Madeline met Harley on the front sidewalk. She lifted the brim of her oversized hat and wiped her brow with the back of her hand. "Hello, Detective Davidson. Beautiful day, isn't it?"

I walked up to join them.

"It certainly is. This is my partner, Detective Strom."

"The one with the motorcycle...it's nice to meet you, Detective. That's my sister, Marjorie, over there. She's bound and determined to get the weeding done today."

She remained on all fours, but smiled and waved.

Harley waved back to Marjorie. "We don't want to keep you, I stopped by to let you know how my case turned out."

"I read about it in the paper but I assumed they left out a lot of the details, as usual."

"Yes, it seems the old deputy chief still has friends in high places. He died in the hospital, and took whatever he knew with him."

"Maybe death was payment for his sins."

Harley filled in Madeline while I wandered around the yard, checking out the perennials. I had several gardens and a pond at my previous home, in Colchester. On my way past Marjorie, I complimented her efforts. When I'd gone full circle around the house, I re-joined Madeline and Harley.

"Can I trouble you two strong men for a favor, before you leave?"

Harley answered. "Tell us what you need."

"Well, you gave me an idea last time you were here...about that white chair. I'd like to move it out here into the garden, but it's a bit heavy and awkward."

We followed her into the house and picked up the chair. While maneuvering it out the door and onto the front porch, we accidentally banged the metal railing. After placing it where Madeline wanted it, I checked for damage. A thick chunk of white paint had chipped off.

"Don't worry about that, I can touch it up later. Can I get you something to drink?"

Harley answered. "No, thanks, we have to get back to work. I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciated your help. It was a pleasure meeting both you ladies."

After a round of smiles and hugs we walked back to the van. Madeline caught me by the elbow before I got to the driver's door. "Don't give up, Detective. She's waiting for you...you just haven't met her yet. She'll be petite and blonde and beautiful, and everything you've been looking for. I see the two of you in a tropical paradise, sipping on cool coconut drinks. Be patient, she's the one."

Not knowing what to make of it, I smiled and thanked her for the insight. Driving down the road after leaving the sisters, I felt Harley staring at me. "What?"

He laughed. "I told you they were freaky...a tropical paradise with a hot blonde, eh? Aren't you dating a redhead now?"

"Yeah, maybe we should keep this to ourselves."

The End

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Edmond Gagnon grew up in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. He joined the Windsor Police Department in 1977, a month before his nineteenth birthday. After thirteen years working the street in uniform, Ed transferred to Drug Enforcement and then Street Crimes.

After being promoted to Sergeant and Detective, he stayed in plain clothes, investigating everything from theft and burglary to arson and murder. He retired with a total of thirty-one years and four months of service.

Within weeks of retirement, Ed took to travelling the world, visiting countries in Southeast Asia and South America as well as riding his motorcycle all over Canada and the United States. A collection of his travel email stories became his first book, *A Casual Traveler*.

Ed went on to create his Norm Strom Crime Series, inspired by events and people he encountered during his years in law enforcement. He then wrote a spin-off , the Abigail Brown Crime Series. .

Edmond Gagnon continues to write, adding the science fiction thriller, *Four*, to his collection of novels. Ed still travels frequently and resides in Windsor, with his wife, Cathryn.

You can see all of Edmond Gagnon's books and more at:

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